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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SODREL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
November 8, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL E. SODREL to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate extend beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

CITIZEN PRIVACY

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, the Sunday Washington Post had an extraordinary story as a result of investigative journalism. The FBI has issued 30,000 national security letters. Now, we will have to back up for a moment to understand what that means. Four years ago, this Congress was stampeded under the anthrax attack and 9/11 into passing a bill it had not read, the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act, which contained many unconstitutional and dubious provisions, many bad ideas from past attorneys general, rejected by previous Congresses, passed in a hysterical time for the Congress.

Now it is about to be reauthorized, and, in fact, strengthened in many ways. This is one of the most disturbing aspects of that legislation. These national security letters used to be fairly rare. They used to issue about 300 a year. They are now issuing 30,000 a year, a 100-fold increase. This is an extraordinary intrusion into the personal lives of many Americans who are not accused of or even suspected of crimes.

As the Post reports, they are issued by FBI field supervisors, local law enforcement FBI agents, not from the national office, no judicial review, no review by the Justice Department, no review by the United States Congress, totally at the discretion of local field supervisors. In fact, the Bush Administration has defeated legislation and a lawsuit to require a public accounting, and they have offered no example, not one, 30,000 a year, and they do not have one example of a national security letter impeding a terrorist attack or actually apprehending a terrorist.

Well, they did apprehend a guy in Portland, Oregon and they did use national security letters. Unfortunately, he was innocent. They were wrong.

As far as we know, it has been used once to apprehend someone and now the government is at risk of paying substantial damages for that false arrest. We do not know of any successful uses. The Bush Administration is defending this. Now they are going to deposit all the information acquired in these massive sweeps of all citizens' credit card records, phone calls, e-mails, everything that relates to who they talk to, who they see, where they go, what they buy, and they are going to put it into government data banks.

But don't worry. Don't worry. They are going to share those private records only with, they say, other Federal agencies, State, local, tribal governments, and appropriate private sector entities. Americans who have had their most intimate lives swept up because of a letter written by a local field supervisor, by the FBI, are now going to have all of that data placed into a data bank, which will be restricted to Federal, State, local, tribal governments and appropriate private sector entities. Maybe your next-door neighbor, too, if they are really nosey.

This is an extraordinary, unwarranted intrusion into the lives of Americans. They cannot even properly analyze and use the data they have. They had the threads of the terrorist attack between the CIA, the FBI and others, they knew a number of these people were in the country illegally, but they could not be bothered to go out and apprehend them or monitor them.

Now they are just gathering up data wholesale on the American people. They are going to share it with other Federal agencies, put it in a private data bank, share it with other forms of government, share it with Native American tribes, for some reason, and appropriate private sector entities. Who are the appropriate private sector entities? Those who could make money off it? I don't know. This is an unbelievable intrusion into personal lives.

If you get one of these letters, and you are in a position to give away someone else's data, if you administer a database for your company or for a credit card company or for a library or a bookstore and you get one of these letters, the new PATRIOT Act is going to say if you tell anybody that you got one of these letters, and you provided indiscriminately massive amounts of data on innocent Americans, you would be a felon if you had told anybody that you had gotten such a letter and you had violated their privacy in that way.

Then, of course, again, the data will be then taken, put into a database, and

shared widely with other governments and appropriate private sector entities. It is unbelievable what this administration is doing to shred our privacy and constitutional rights.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10:00 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 7 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend Griffin Lotson, Sams Memorial Church of God in Christ, Darien, GA, offered the following prayer:

Our Father and Lord, we thank You for all Your blessings as we pray today for our Nation and our leaders in America. Today we pray for Your protection for every man and woman serving in our Armed Forces. We pray for strength for their families. May they know the peace of God that passes all understanding.

God, You guide all creation with loving care and establish an order that governs all of us. God help us to trust in Your faithful love and deepen our love for one another, especially for those most in need. We pray for our schools, teachers and students, for their spiritual and educational success.

Give us knowledge to know that it is You who are the source of our unity and peace. It is You who unites us all. This we ask in the Lord's name. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCNULTY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MCNULTY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND GRIFFIN LOTSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a friend of mine and a fellow Georgian who had the great honor of giving our opening prayer today. The Reverend Griffin Lotson is a man of great character and has served as our Guest Chaplain.

Reverend Lotson has been a pastor of Sams Memorial Church of God in Christ in Crescent, Georgia, for 18 years. During that time he has also served as executive director of Sams Memorial Community Economic Development, a nonprofit organization dedicated to affording low-income citizens the opportunity to realize the American dream of purchasing a home.

Reverend Lotson and Sams Memorial have been able to partner with the Federal, State and local governments to develop a multimillion-dollar housing development in Georgia. Through his hard work, families who never imagined they would be able to afford a home for their children are now achieving that dream.

His success has earned him many awards. Reverend Lotson was voted 2005 Citizen of the Year by the Rotary Club of McIntosh County and was a national award winner of the 2005 Rural Leader of America, just to name a few.

Reverend Lotson has been blessed in his personal life as well as in his ministry. He and his beautiful wife of 28 years, Carolyn, have three children, all of whom have bravely served this country as members of the Navy and the United States Air Force.

Mr. Speaker, through his hard work and dedication, and through the gospel of Jesus Christ, Griffin Lotson has earned the respect and admiration of the members of his church, his community and his State. It is an honor to have him with us today.

SAM BUNDY SCHOOL—THANK GOD FOR KIDS

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, when the howling winds and incessant rains of Hurricane Katrina came barreling ashore on the southeast Texas coast, the small coastal town of Sabine Pass was almost completely destroyed by destruction and devastation. School Superintendent Walt Fenn immediately worried about the 300 students who attended K–12 school, Sabine Pass School.

Thousands of miles away, however, elementary school kids at Sam Bundy School in Farmville, North Carolina, heard about the devastation in Texas. They too experienced a similar destruction in Hurricane Floyd in 1999. These kids wanted the students in Sabine Pass to know everything will be okay.

The children at Sam Bundy School raised over $2,500 for the school kids in Texas, school kids they had never met in a place they had never seen. There was no red tape, no Federal bureaucracy, just a bunch of kids in a small town in North Carolina that wanted to help some other kids in Texas.

The students at Sam Bundy School are wonderful examples of Americanism and volunteerism. Now they have a whole crew of new pen-pals in southeast Texas that will forever be grateful. These Sam Bundy students remind me of the song ''Thank God for Kids,'' another example of children being our greatest natural resource. That's just the way it is.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, this week this House will consider a budget bill that contains changes in the farm bill that will adversely affect and impact the environment, the poor and the hungry, and the pocketbooks of farm families. While farmers are struggling with high prices for gas, propane, natural gas and fertilizer, the Republican budget breaks the promise of the farm bill.

While working families are confronting higher fuel prices, the Republican bill severely cuts food stamps, forcing families to choose between food and heat for their homes. I strongly support tough budget discipline to rein in the budget deficit, but this bill does the very opposite.

Regardless of whether they cut $39 billion or $50 billion, it is not enough to offset the $70 billion in lost revenue from their tax bill. At the end of the day, the Republican reconciliation bill will only worsen the deficit and leave our children with a higher debt. I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this bad bill.

SMITHS AEROSPACE

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome Smiths Aerospace to the Fifth Congressional District of North Carolina. After looking at more than 50 potential sites, the company recently announced it will open a $44 million facility in Ashe County.

The new facility is expected to hire 100 employees immediately and employ 305 workers within 5 years. As a major supplier to Boeing and Airbus, Smiths Aerospace will provide equipment for civilian and military aircraft and build many engine components as turbines for jets. The company expects to have the plant running by mid-November and has its first shipments planned for February of next year.

I would like to commend Smiths Aerospace for choosing to do business in the Fifth District. Northwest North

Carolina has a great deal to offer including friendly people, a hardworking and highly skilled workforce, excellent institutions of higher education, and a beautiful landscape.

I wish Smiths Aerospace great success in all its future endeavors.

IN OPPOSITION TO THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET RECONCILIATION

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Republican budget reconciliation. I believe this process has nothing to do with reconciliation. Instead, we have an ideological devastation of the future of families, children, students, the poor, and the elderly in this country.

It would look at these cuts: education, $14 billion; nutrition, $844 million in food stamp cuts; Medicaid, $10 billion; veterans, not addressing the real needs of veterans in this country; foster care, $577 million; SSI and TANF, $8 billion; child support, $5 billion.

These cuts that are being asked for by the Republicans in the reconciliation are a direct result of their policies, policies that are giving tax breaks to corporations, tax cuts to the very wealthy, a $1-billion-a-day war, and a borrow-and-spend fiscal policy that the Republican Party has instituted.

The backbone of this Nation is its families. The door of opportunity has to remain open for all families. There is always room at the inn.

I urge a ''no'' vote on the reconciliation.

THE NINTH CIRCUIT COURT RULING ON PARENTING

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, like millions of parents across the country, we were shocked last week by the ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This ruling denies parents their right to have a say in the content their children are taught in school. In its decision, the Ninth Circuit said, ''We hold that parents have no due process or privacy right to override the determinations of public schools as to the information to which their children will be exposed while enrolled as students.''

Mr. Speaker, parents, not schools and certainly not the courts, hold the primary responsibility for educating their children, especially when it comes to more sensitive subject matters like sexual, moral, or religious instruction. But the Ninth Circuit, the same court that ruled the phrase ''under God'' in the Pledge of Allegiance to be unconstitutional, would strip parents of this fundamental role in their own children's lives.

Last week we addressed an errant court ruling on eminent domain and private property rights. Should this ruling stand, we will need to correct this wayward court yet again.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET RECONCILIATION WILL NEGLECT THE POOR TO HELP THE PRIVILEGED FEW

(Mr. MENENDEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, this week House Republicans will once again demonstrate why the American people no longer have confidence in them to lead this Nation.

At a time when college tuition is skyrocketing, House Republicans propose to cut over $14 billion in student loan funding, increasing the cost for college for American families by $5,800.

At a time that the number of families with no health insurance is growing, House Republicans propose slashing Medicaid by $12 billion, forcing our Nation's most vulnerable to either pay more themselves or lose the health services they need.

At a time that the majority talks about values, House Republicans propose decimating Federal funding for child support enforcement, allowing deadbeat parents to avoid their responsibility.

And at a time when our national debt sets daily records, House Republicans propose to actually increase the deficit by more than $100 billion, using these cuts to ensure tax cuts for the wealthiest.

That is what a Republican majority means for our country. Together, America can indeed do better.

THREATS POSED BY IRAN

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Iran's growing threat to our allies in the Middle East and to America's national interests.

The Iranian president recently said Israel should be ''wiped off the map.'' This malicious language must not be ignored, especially considering Iran's long-standing support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah, and its unlawful nuclear ambitions.

Terrorist groups supported by Iran are operating today in Gaza, the West Bank, and Iraq, undermining the region's quest for democracy and threatening the lives of innocent civilians.

Iran's radical government seeks to develop nuclear weapons. If Iran gains nuclear capabilities, millions of innocent Israelis, as well as our allies in the Middle East, will be jeopardized and our hopes for Middle East peace will be lost.

Mr. Speaker, we must not abandon Israel, leaving them to stand alone against this imminent threat. The United States must lead, with our allies, in eliminating Iran's support for terrorist groups and requiring Iran to fulfill nuclear nonproliferation agreements.

THE REPUBLICANS' PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I want to quote an article that appeared last Friday in the Chicago Sun-Times by religion writer Kathleen Falsani under the headline ''Bush Administration's Moral Compass Is Lost.''

She wrote, '' . . . this week, as Republican leaders try to force a monstrous $50 billion budget cut designed allegedly to offset the mounting costs . . . of hurricane-related aid through Congress, it is clear that the Bush administration's moral compass . . . has been lost. The proposed budget cuts, part of the so-called 'budget reconciliation,' would have devastating effects on the poorest, most vulnerable Americans, while allowing tax relief for the rich.''

She goes on to say, ''Maybe Republican leaders should consider proposing an open season on the homeless or the resurrection of debtors' prisons while they're at it. Is this the kind of leadership the majority of voters that, according to the pollsters at the time, cast their ballots in 2004 based on 'moral values' had in mind? Is this what faith-based 'compassionate conservatism' looks like? Is our Nation more moral, more secure, or spiritually healthier than it was a year ago? And to address my fellow Christian voters,'' she said, ''has the Good News been advanced in any way? No, absolutely not.''

America can do better.

□ 1015

AMERICA'S ECONOMY GROWING

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, it was reported that U.S. productivity grew at the fastest clip in more than a year, signaling a steady growth of the economy. Nonfarm business productivity surged at a 4.1 percent annual rate. The increase exceeded economists' expectations and was almost twice that of the prior quarter.

This has caused a gauge of inflationary pressure to drop. When productivity rises smartly, employers can raise and boost wages without fueling inflation. Increasing productivity helps us compete with China so that we can export more to China.

I believe this success is due to the tax cuts enacted by President Bush. The Bush policies have caused the

gross domestic product to surge by 3.8 percent. It has created over 4 million jobs. The stock market has appreciated over $6 trillion. There is a record percentage of homeownership; and, for the first time ever, over 50 percent of minorities own their own homes.

I appreciate President Bush's leadership. I look forward to more successes.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

MEDICARE PART D

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, next week, on November 15, senior citizens across America will have the opportunity to sign up for a benefit that is long overdue, and that is prescription drug coverage.

The initial sign-up date for Medicare part D runs from November 15, 2005, through May 15, 2006. Coverage starts January 1, 2006, so the sooner seniors sign up, the sooner they can start saving.

Here is what seniors should know about Medicare part D. It is available to all Medicare beneficiaries. The benefit is voluntary, so seniors will need to choose to sign up. They will have a choice of plans with a low monthly premium, and all Medicare-approved plans will cover both generic and brand-name prescription drugs and will be accepted at pharmacies close to home.

There are several ways seniors can sign up for Medicare part D. Watch the mail for information from Social Security and Medicare; call 1–800–Medicare, where trained staff can answer questions and help you sign up 7 days a week, 24 hours a day; or visit the Web site www.medicare.gov.

If our seniors have access to affordable prescription drugs, they will reap the benefits of modern medicine and live healthier lives.

GOP DOUBLETALK ON ENERGY

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow some of the biggest names in the oil industry are coming to Capitol Hill to testify on why their companies are making record profits at the same time American families are struggling to heat their homes.

We are hearing some really big talk from Republicans. Why, if you were Rip Van Winkle, you might actually believe the Republicans were trying to do something about gas prices. Yet the tune they are singing now is really different from the tune they were singing back in the summer when they passed the energy bill. Back then, they were singing from the energy industry's hymn book.

The fact is, thanks to a Republican-backed energy bill loaded with taxpayer subsidies to big oil to the tune of $14 billion, American families are struggling with sky-high energy bills and oil companies are struggling for ways to count their cash.

Just an example: ExxonMobil recently reported that their profits increased by 75 percent in the third quarter, and so what do we do? We give them $14 billion as taxpayer subsidies to help them run their business plan.

Americans are seeing a Congress that has done nothing to help them and do everything to help the oil companies.

Mr. Speaker, it is wrong to hand out money to energy companies who are making record massive profits and then cut funding for home heating assistance to our elderly. We need a change. We need new priorities. America can do better.

SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, something is not right. When you look at the budget reconciliation act and you look at the terrible devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma and the impact in the Gulf region, and you see the impact on schools like Xavier and Dillard and Tulane and Loyola, and then Texas Southern University in Texas that has taken over 600 hurricane Katrina students, along with the University of Houston, and we are attempting to cause our students billions of dollars in aid in the Budget Reconciliation Act, something is not right. Something is not right when small and disadvantaged businesses cannot even participate in the rebuild after Hurricane Katrina. Something is not right when large corporations are blocking the opportunities for small businesses to be engaged.

The Budget Reconciliation Act is not a problem solver. It creates problems. How can you put the burden of the deficits created by House Republicans and others on the backs of students who are attempting to achieve an education? Something is not right when we are cutting billions of dollars of student aid.

REDUCING DEFICIT SPENDING FOR THE GOOD OF AMERICA

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, once again, we continue to hear gross mischaracterizations of what it is that we are trying to do. Democrats and Republicans alike decry deficit spending. They say we have to balance the budget, both sides of the aisle.

We have come together with what I hope will be a bipartisan package at the end of the day that is designed to bring about 50-plus billion dollars in spending reductions. We all decry the fact that mandatory spending is out of control.

What is it we are doing with this package? Well, for the first time in a long time, we are trying to rein in so-called mandatory spending. The reason is that we believe in growing our economy, not Federal spending; we believe in reducing the reach of government, not limiting the reach of individuals; and we believe in government's helping hand, not government's heavy hand.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the day after tomorrow, when we look at this important legislation, that we do all that we can to come together and try to do what the American people want us to do, and that is reduce the size and scope and reach of the Federal Government.

REPUBLICAN RAID ON STUDENT AID SHOWS MISGUIDED PRIORITIES

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, parents and students should take note: College may soon get a lot more expensive if House Republicans get their way.

This week, they plan to bring a budget reconciliation bill to the floor that cuts $14 billion in Federal student aid, the largest cuts in the program's history. Included are nearly $8 billion in new charges that will raise the cost of college loans through new fees and higher interest for millions of American students and families.

For the typical student borrower already saddled with over $17,000 in debt, these new fees and higher interest charges will cost up to $5,800 more.

Financial barriers should never prevent a qualified student from going to college, and that is why America has long since made the commitment to help all Americans afford a higher education. Studies show that financial barriers alone will prevent over 4 million high school graduates from attending a 4-year public university over the next decade and prevent another 2 million from attending college at all.

Mr. Speaker, the wrong priorities in this Republican budget reconciliation will put college out of reach for millions of American students. It should be rejected.

$10 BILLION FIX FOR MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT NOT INCLUDED IN HOUSE BUDGET RECONCILIATION

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, my community has the fastest growing senior population in the United States. I also have numbers of doctors that are telling me they can no longer afford to

care for their Medicare patients because of the Medicare reimbursement being so bad. We know that we have to fix this Medicare reimbursement for our doctors so they will continue to be able to afford to treat our senior citizens.

In the Senate reconciliation that they are introducing, they have a $10 billion fix so we could help the doctors, so they can continue to take care of our senior citizens. In the House version, they are saying they are not going to include the $10 billion, and the doctors are going to have to take care of themselves.

But the misery about this and the hypocrisy is the Republican leadership is telling the doctors, Don't worry about it. We're not going to put it in the budget reconciliation so that you can continue taking care of senior patients. We're going to put it in Labor-HHS.

Well, we have already passed Labor-HHS, and there is no $10 billion for the doctors.

So that means that we are perpetrating a fraud on the doctors, the patients, and the seniors in this country, and we need not to do that.

THE RIGHT RECONCILIATION FOR AMERICA

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Republicans hope to jam through a reconciliation the day before Veterans' Day, including $54 billion in cuts. He talked about a helping hand? Doubling the origination fee for student loans, cutting $14 billion in student loans is a helping hand for the next generation of Americans? Cutting foster care, school lunches, Medicaid, not to reduce the budget deficit but to make room for $70 billion of tax cuts for people who earn over $300,000 a year. That is what they are doing.

We should reconcile a few things around here. Let us reconcile their hypocrisy. Let us reconcile their purported support for the troops and our vets with the fact that the budget is inadequate to provide promised benefits, and they are doing nothing about that in the budget reconciliation.

Let's have some reconciliation and do things that are right for America.

IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 505

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the House International Relations Committee will hear a resolution of inquiry into the White House Iraq Group.

A White House task force was organized in August of 2002, 7 months before the invasion of Iraq, with the objective of marketing a war in Iraq to the Congress and the American people. The group consisted of advisers to the President and Vice President, including Rove, Libby, and Rice.

According to the Washington Post, the White House Iraq Group produced white papers that provided ''gripping images and stories,'' and used ''literary license'' with intelligence; I might add, intelligence that was later proved false. These memos served as the basis for talking points for the President and his advisers.

The intelligence used in the White House Iraq Group's white papers included the false claim that Iraq had sought uranium from Niger, as well as the claim that the high-strength aluminum tubes Iraq purchased from China were to be used for the sole purpose of building centrifuges to enrich uranium.

This White House Iraq Group was putting out lies to the American people. The Congress needs to find out what happened. Tomorrow, we can find out in International Relations.

Support House Resolution 505.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

SUPPORTING THE ACCESSION OF ISRAEL TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 38) expressing support for the accession of Israel to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 38

Whereas Israel has been trying to join the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 2000, when it met the OECD's membership requirements relating to industrial and per-capita product criteria;

Whereas in March 2005, OECD Secretary-General Donald Johnston stated that expanding the OECD's membership to include more countries is vital if the group is to remain a forum for discussing global economic policies;

Whereas in 2004, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and then Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu sent a joint letter to the foreign and finance ministers of the 30 member countries of the OECD, stating that Israel's involvement as a non-member country in the OECD's various committees is increasing, and that Israel meets the economic and institutional criteria required to join the OECD;

Whereas in October 2004, then Israeli Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stated that joining the OECD was of strategic importance for repositioning Israel's economy from an emerging market to a developed one, adding that membership in the OECD would attract foreign investment;

Whereas in August 2004, the Israel Laboratory Accreditation Authority was invited to become a full member of the OECD Environment Policy Committee, the first committee that Israel has been invited to join as a full member;

Whereas Israel was asked to take part in the OECD's Insurance and Commerce Committees;

Whereas in March 2005, Israel was formally accepted as an observer on the OECD's Financial Statistics Committee, allowing experts from the Bank of Israel and Central Bureau of Statistics to participate in the committee's meetings;

Whereas the World Bank ranks Israel among the 25 countries in which it is easiest to do business;

Whereas Israel's tax burden, encompassing income and property taxes, customs duties, value-added taxes (VAT) and national insurance, is much lower than in most OECD member countries;

Whereas membership in the OECD could enhance Israel's status on the global market and within international financial institutions, lowering the risk factor on foreign loans to Israel;

Whereas Israel's economic and technological standing could potentially benefit OECD member countries in the science and technology, including high-technology, sectors;

Whereas in 2003, the World Economic Forum ranked Israel 20th out of 102 countries in its Growth Competitiveness Index, and the World Economic Forum's Technology Index ranked Israel 9th, before Canada (11th), Norway (13th), Germany (14th), the United Kingdom (16th), and the Netherlands (18th); and

Whereas Israel is carrying out far reaching economic reforms based on the OECD's recommendations with respect to taxes, labor, competition, capital markets, pension funds, energy, infrastructures, communications, and transport: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) Israel shares the commitment to democratic government and the market economy that is the foundation of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);

(2) Israel meets the OECD's membership requirements and has been an active participant as a non-member country in various OECD activities, such as adherence to the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises; and

(3) the United States Government should support and advocate the accession of Israel to the OECD, including through coordination of efforts with Mexico, Great Britain, and other countries supportive of Israel's membership in the OECD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 38.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the leadership for bringing House Resolution 38 before the House today. This resolution was unanimously adopted by the House International Relations Committee on September 15, and it expresses support for the accession of Israel to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD.

□ 1030

More than 50 years have elapsed since George Marshall's speech at Harvard, which led to the Marshall Plan and the creation of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, which is the forerunner for the OECD.

His vision of economic cooperation based on common values and policies is now shared by even more countries, which are enjoying mutually beneficial relationships for their membership in the OECD.

Israel has been attempting to join the OECD since the year 2000 when it met the organisation's industrial and per-capita product criteria. Not only could OECD membership enhance Israel's status in the global market and within international financial institutions, but also other OECD countries could potentially benefit in the science and high tech sectors due to Israel's economic and advanced technological standing.

Israel also shares in the commitment to democratic governance and free market principles, and those are the foundations of the OECD. As a result, in December of 2004, Israel was invited on an ad hoc basis to participate as an observer in discussions of the trade committee of the OECD.

Since then Israel has been asked to take part in the OECD's Insurance and Commerce Committees, and in March of this year Israel was formally accepted as an observer of the OECD's Financial Statistics Committee.

As articulated in the resolution before us, Mr. Speaker, Israel meets the OECD's membership requirements and has been an active participant as a nonmember country in various OECD activities, such as adherence to the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises.

Mr. Speaker, in the aftermath of Israel's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, Israel needs the support of its staunchest ally, the United States, to help expedite the process of achieving full membership in all international forums. The United States must make it clear to the international community that Israel must be afforded full representation in all appropriate agencies and bodies.

Inclusion of Israel as a full member of the OECD is a positive and important first step.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of this resolution. First, I want to commend my dear friend and distinguished colleague from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for introducing this very important resolution.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, this resolution, in a sense, is a response to the outrageous statement of the President of Iran calling for the extermination of the State of Israel. Israel has more than earned the right to full membership in the Organisation For Economic Co-operation and Development.

Some foreign policy judgments are difficult to make, but this one could not be any easier. Like other OECD states, the State of Israel is a democratic, prosperous, free market economy. And by all measures, Israel's economy outstrips that of several current members of OECD. For example, Israel's per capita income is greater than that of nine of the OECD's 30 members. The World Economic Forum's technology index ranks Israel in the top 10 nations on the face of this planet, ahead of Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom. Recently, Israel was the world's third largest software producer, exceeded only by the United States and Canada.

Israel, Mr. Speaker, is already an important institutional contributor to the OECD as a nonmember participant. Israel has long outgrown its nonmember status.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Israel meets every economic, political and institutional prerequisite for OECD membership. Its continued omission from that body would inevitably call into question the motives of some of the OECD members. And I hope we will not face that ugly prospect.

I urge the administration to support Israeli membership in the OECD and to lobby our fellow members to achieve that goal.

In connection with this resolution, Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to return to the outrageous statement of the Iranian President calling for wiping Israel off the face of the global map. The President of Iran, in making this outrageous statement, has evoked tremendous global outrage at his views, and I am very pleased to publicly recognize the decision of Secretary General Kofi Annan to cancel his trip to Tehran.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I wrote Kofi Annan a strong letter to which he responded affirmatively canceling his visit to Iran. I publicly want to acknowledge the Secretary General's fine decision and commend him for his action.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for his continued steadfast leadership on the issues of democracy and empowerment, and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for her insightfulness and the interest of this particular legislation.

I rise as well to give my support to this legislation which provides for the encouragement and the support of Israel acceding to the Organisation For Economic Co-operation and Development. And as I do so, might I associate myself with the words of my colleague from California and denounce, as well, the words of tyranny and disgrace offered by the Iranian President on extinguishing or exterminating both the people and the nation of Israel.

I would think that this particular legislation speaks to rewarding those who are advocating for democracy and independence, and that is what Israel stands for.

I would hope in Iran that the good people of Iran, the people who believe in freedom, the freedom fighters, those who are supporting the enhancement of the working and middle class, who believe in the expansion of the intelligentsia, will again speak inside of Iran against such devastating language.

In this instance, the OECD recommends economic democracy, if you will, and Israel is already a high-powered and technologically advanced society with a thriving economy that will add to the mission of OECD. The World Bank ranks Israel among the 25 countries in which it is easiest to do business. In 2003 the World Economic Forum ranked Israel 20th out of 102 countries in its growth competitive index, and the World Economic Forum's technology index ranked Israel 9 before Canada, which is 11; Norway, 13; Germany, 14; the United Kingdom, 16; and the Netherlands, 18.

Israel is carrying out far-reaching economic reforms on the OECD's recommendation with respect to taxes, labor, competition, capital markets, pension funds, energy, infrastructures, communications and transport. And I believe the important aspect of what Israel is doing is, in the region, it provides for a stabilizing force of democracy and an economic arm of democracy helping its Mid East neighbors to join as well along the pathway of democracy and economic improvement. And so I believe this is a very important legislative statement for us to move forward in encouraging the admission of Israel into the OECD. And as well, I think it says again that we are standing alongside of Israel in its attempt to embrace all who want to follow the pathway of democracy.

Might I say that I hope that we will also have this impact on the Palestinians as they work toward democracy, and this shared influence will impact the region positively.

Likewise, as I close, let me say that we hope that the President of Iran will

find his moral compass to cease such horrible and atrocious language that would suggest the elimination of a country that promotes democracy and cares for its people, like Israel. Israel shares a commitment to democratic government and the market economy, and that is the foundation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and this legislation should be passed.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 38, ''Expressing support for the accession of Israel to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).''

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Israeli economy has been steadily transformed from an economy supported by farmers on hillsides to a technologically advanced and services-based economy. Trade liberalization, abolition of exchange controls, adoption of modern corporate governance rules and intellectual property protection enhancement have led to the establishment of a healthy economic environment ripe for domestic and foreign investment. Encouragement to high-tech industries and a wide network of international commitments have reinforced the beneficial effects.

Israel has been trying to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 2000, when it met the OECD's membership requirements relating to industrial and per-capita product criteria. Membership in the OECD would strengthen Israel's status on the global market and within international financial institutions, lowering the risk factor on foreign loans to Israel. Israel's economic and technological standing could potentially benefit OECD member countries in the science and technology, including high-technology, sectors.

Israel is already a high powered, technologically advanced society with a thriving economy that will add to the mission of the OECD. The World Bank ranks Israel among the 25 countries in which it is easiest to do business. In 2003, the World Economic Forum ranked Israel 20th out of 102 countries in its Growth Competitiveness Index, and the World Economic Forum's Technology Index ranked Israel 9th, before Canada (11th), Norway (13th), Germany (14th), the United Kingdom (16th), and the Netherlands (18th). Israel is carrying out far reaching economic reforms based on the OECD's recommendations with respect to taxes, labor, competition, capital markets, pension funds, energy, infrastructures, communications, and transport.

I support H. Res. 38 for the foregoing reasons, and I appeal to my colleagues to follow suit.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional requests for time. Before yielding back the balance of my time, I would like to make a general statement on this very important piece of legislation. Unfortunately, the world is filled with rogue states, failed states, basket-case states, states that neither politically nor economically function in a viable fashion. And to have the President of Iran call for the physical extermination of one of the relatively small number of democratic, viable, prosperous, civilized societies is the ultimate outrage of recent pronouncements by political leaders on the face of this planet.

I commend my colleague from Florida for introducing this important resolution, recognizing that Israel is one of the minority of states which are democratic, prosperous and civilized.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my support for House Resolution 38 and to strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution as well.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a group of 30 member countries—including the United States—sharing a commitment to democratic government and the market economy.

Its work covers economic and social issues from macroeconomics, to trade, education, development and science and innovation.

Israel has been attempting to join the OECD since 2000, when it met the organization's industrial and per-capita product criteria.

Not only could OECD membership enhance Israel's status in the global market and within international financial institutions but also other OECD countries could potentially benefit in the science and high-tech sectors due to Israel's economic and advanced technological standing.

Israel also shares the commitment to democratic governance and free market principles that are the foundation of the OECD.

As a result, in December 2004, Israel was invited, on an ad hoc basis, to participate as an observer in discussions of the trade committee of the OECD and has participated in numerous other OECD activities, however it has not been granted full membership.

House Resolution 38 expresses that the United States supports full membership for Israel in the OECD based on its commitment to democracy, the market economy, and OECD's principles and mission.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support Israel's membership in the OECD, and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for his help on this resolution as well as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE).

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 38, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

SAN FRANCISCO OLD MINT COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1953) to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the Old Mint at San Francisco, otherwise known as the ''Granite Lady'', and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1953

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress hereby finds as follows:

(1) The Granite Lady played an important role in the history of the Nation.

(2) The San Francisco Mint was established pursuant to an Act of Congress of July 3, 1852, to convert miners' gold from the California gold rush into coins.

(3) The San Francisco Old Mint Building was designed by architect A.B. Mullett, who also designed the United States Treasury Building and the Old Executive Office Building.

(4) The solid construction of the Granite Lady enabled it to survive the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, making it the only financial institution that was able to operate immediately after the earthquake as the treasury for disaster relief funds for the city of San Francisco.

(5) Coins struck at the San Francisco Old Mint are distinguished by the ''S'' mint mark.

(6) The San Francisco Old Mint is famous for having struck many rare, legendary issues, such as the 1870–S $3 coin, which is valued today at well over $1,000,000, and the 1894–S dime which is comparatively rare.

(7) The San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin will be the first commemorative coin to honor a United States mint.

SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.

(a) DENOMINATIONS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and in commemoration of the San Francisco Old Mint, the Secretary of the Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the ''Secretary'') shall mint and issue the following coins:

(1) $5 GOLD COINS.—Not more than 100,000 $5 coins, which shall—

(A) weigh 8.359 grams;

(B) have a diameter of 0.850 inches; and

(C) contain 90 percent gold and 10 percent alloy.

(2) $1 SILVER COINS.—Not more than 500,000 $1 coins, which shall—

(A) weigh 26.73 grams;

(B) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and

(C) contain 90 percent silver and 10 percent copper.

(b) LEGAL TENDER.—The coins minted under this Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of title 31, United States Code.

(c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.

(a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The design of the coins minted under this Act shall be emblematic of the San Francisco Old Mint Building, its importance to California and the history of the United States, and its role in rebuilding San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

(2) DESIGNATION AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On each coin minted under this Act there shall be—

(A) a designation of the value of the coin;

(B) an inscription of the year ''2006''; and

(C) inscriptions of the words ''Liberty'', ''In God We Trust'', ''United States of America'', and ''E Pluribus Unum''.

(b) SELECTION.—The design for the coins minted under this Act shall be—

(1) selected by the Secretary, after consultation with the Commission of Fine Arts, and the Board of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society; and

(2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee.

SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.

(a) QUALITY OF COINS.—Coins minted under this Act shall be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

(b) MINT FACILITY.—The coins authorized under this Act shall be struck at the San Francisco Mint to the greatest extent possible.

(c) PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.—The Secretary may issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year period beginning on January 1, 2006.

SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.

(a) SALE PRICE.—The coins issued under this Act shall be sold by the Secretary at a price equal to the sum of—

(1) the face value of the coins;

(2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with respect to such coins; and

(3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

(b) BULK SALES.—The Secretary shall make bulk sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable discount.

(c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall accept prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act before the issuance of such coins.

(2) DISCOUNT.—Sale prices with respect to prepaid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a reasonable discount.

SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—All sales of coins minted under this Act shall include a surcharge as follows:

(1) A surcharge of $35 per coin for the $5 coin.

(2) A surcharge of $10 per coin for the $1 coin.

(b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of title 31, United States Code, all surcharges received by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society for use for the purposes of rehabilitating the Historic Old Mint in San Francisco as a city museum and an American Coin and Gold Rush Museum.

(c) AUDITS.—The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society shall be subject to the audit requirements of section 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard to the amounts received by the Fund under subsection (b).

(d) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding subsection (a), no surcharge may be included with respect to the issuance under this Act of any coin during a calendar year if, as of the time of such issuance, the issuance of such coin would result in the number of commemorative coin programs issued during such year to exceed the annual 2 commemorative coin program issuance limitation under section 5112(m)(1) of title 31, United States Code (as in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act). The Secretary of the Treasury may issue guidance to carry out this subsection.

SEC. 8. TECHNICAL CORRECTION.

Notwithstanding the fifth sentence of section 5112(d)(1) of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary of the Treasury may continue to issue, after December 31, 2005, numismatic items that contain 5-cent coins minted in the years 2004 and 2005.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY).

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1953, the San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin Act. This legislation, which I and two-thirds of this House have cosponsored, will recognize the unique contribution to American history of the Old San Francisco Mint by authorizing 100,000 gold half eagles and 500,000 silver dollars to be struck to raise funds to preserve this facility.

The San Francisco Mint was authorized by Congress in 1852 to convert Gold Rush bullion into coins for our growing economy. This landmark facility was one of the only public buildings to survive the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and become a rebuilding center and symbol of the city's recovery. Just 9 years after the earthquake in San Francisco, the San Francisco Mint struck the coins for the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition celebrating the rebirth of San Francisco and the opening of the Panama Canal.

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These coins include the celebrated 50-dollar commemorative gold pieces, the largest denomination commemorative coins ever struck in this country, as well as the only hexagonal coin ever struck in this country.

The design of the coins authorized under this act will join the Panama Pacific Coins and other famous coins struck at the Old San Francisco Mint as monuments to coin design and the history of our Nation.

I urge the Members of the House to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to manage debate on Leader PELOSI's bill for the Democratic side. Since the bill has over 291 bipartisan co-sponsors, my task is a pleasure.

This bill commemorates the historic San Francisco Old Mint Building which housed the San Francisco Mint from 1874 to 1937 and is a national historic landmark.

The San Francisco Mint was established in the 1850s because it did not make sense to transport the gold being produced by the California Gold Rush all the way to Philadelphia for coinage. Called the ''Granite Lady,'' the building was designed by A.B. Mullet, the architect of the two buildings that flank the White House, the U.S. Treasury Building and the Old Executive Office Building. In fact, the Old Mint looks quite a bit like our Treasury Building.

The Granite Lady survived both the earthquake and fire of 1906 and served as the treasury for the disaster relief funds afterwards since no other financial institution was operational. The Mint outgrew the building by 1937 and moved to a new facility.

Today, the San Francisco Mint only produces commemorative coins, so if you find a circulating coin with the S for San Francisco on it, it is a curiosity and a collector's item.

The Granite Lady is now owned by the City of San Francisco which is converting it to a museum. I find it particularly appropriate that we are honoring this landmark with a commemorative coin 100 years after the great fire. The bill requires the Treasury Department to mint and issue gold and silver coins in 2006 only. To the extent possible, they are to be minted at the San Francisco Mint. The profit from the sales of the coins is to be given to the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society to convert the old building into a museum which will house exhibits on the Gold Rush and coinage, among other important city themes.

I note that in a bipartisan spirit, at the request of the administration, the bill corrects a technical problem so as to ensure that collectable coin sets including nickel coins can be available to collectors beyond the original period which was mistakenly limited. The Senate has informed us they have no objection to this addition.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the sponsor of this bill and the House Democratic leader.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and for her leadership on this bill which is so important to the City of San Francisco but, more importantly, to our country because it is part of our country's history.

I want to extend my gratitude as well to my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle who have made this a very bipartisan effort. As was indicated by the gentlewoman from New York, we have 291 co-sponsors. That is why we were able to come to the floor. I thank Members so much for their help.

I am proud to rise in support of the San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin Act, my bill to authorize the issuance of commemorative coins in 2006 honoring San Francisco's Old Mint. As you know, Mr. Speaker, that was the year of the great earthquake in California, so the history is very meaningful to our area. H.R. 1953 will help ensure that this building exists for many generations to come.

Congress established the San Francisco Old Mint, as others have referenced, in 1852. This was immediately following the Gold Rush in 1849, and it

was affectionately known as the Granite Lady.

The Mint is the oldest stone structure in San Francisco. Its architect, A.B. Mullet, also designed the United States Treasury Building, and we all know how beautiful that is, and the Old Executive Office Building here in Washington, D.C.

In 1906, disaster struck the City of San Francisco in the great earthquake of that year; and next year will be the 100th anniversary of the earthquake that leveled much of San Francisco. With infrastructure destroyed and lines of communication severed, the city was unable to respond when a subsequent fire spread to anything that would burn. The blaze raged for more than 3 days and destroyed more than 28,000 buildings. More than 3,000 people died and more than 225,000 lost their homes. This was a huge number considering the population of San Francisco at the time.

Yet, as much of the city crumbled in one of the worst natural disasters in our Nation's history, the Granite Lady stood strong. Mullet's architecture let the Mint float on its foundation, allowing it to survive the earthquake and the fire. Treasury Department employees worked with the United States Army with only one hose connected to two wells on the property to save this building and the $200 million in gold that was stored in its vaults. It was the only functional financial institution after the quake in San Francisco and was used as a relief fund treasury. The coin's 2006 issuance, 100 years later, will honor the Mint and its role in San Francisco's recovery.

The Old Mint operated until 1937. It played a pivotal role in the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and the economic development of the western United States. At one time, the Granite Lady produced more than half of the United States coinage; and by 1934 it held a third of the Nation's gold supply. The Mint produced many rare coins, some worth more than $1 million, Mr. Speaker. Coins minted in San Francisco bear the S mint mark, which is very significant.

In 1961, the Mint was designated a National Historic Landmark but slowly fell into disrepair, to be closed in 1994 due to structural concerns. Since that time, I have worked with our two senators, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BOXER, to give the recognition to the Old Mint, the Granite Lady, that she deserved.

The National Trust For Historic Preservation lists the Mint as one of the most endangered American structures. Today, with this bill, we can help declare the Old Mint endangered no longer.

The American Numismatic Association has partnered with the City of San Francisco and the City of San Francisco Museum and Historical Society to establish a special coin museum. When completed, the Mint will be one of the Nation's largest museums devoted to telling the story of our country's coinage from colonial times up to the present. Along with our rich history comes a responsibility to preserve and protect it for future generations.

I am very, very proud of the history that the Old Mint, the Old Granite Lady, represents. It is about the founding of our city in San Francisco in Gold Rush times. The Mint almost corresponds to that date, and it has been part of our history and that of our country ever since. I urge my colleagues to join us in commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1906 earthquake and fire and to honor the landmark of national significance with a vote for H.R. 1953.

Again, I thank our colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, for their cooperation on this bill which is very important to our country's history.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and colleague from New York for yielding me time. I would like to pay special tribute to the Democratic leader, Ms. PELOSI, for offering this bill. I have the great privilege of representing the City of San Francisco along with Ms. PELOSI.

Mr. Speaker, during the Gold Rush of 1848, so much precious metal was found in Northern California that the United States was compelled to build a mint in order to melt the gold into coins for ease of transportation across the United States. The construction of our Mint in San Francisco was authorized in 1852, and it was completed just 2 years later. But soon the Mint outgrew its humble beginnings, and in 1874 a new building was erected in the style of an ancient Greek temple.

The walls of stone would allow the Mint to withstand one of the most devastating earthquakes the United States has ever experienced. On April 18, 1906, at 5:12 in the morning, San Francisco woke to the earth shaking like never before. The Old Mint was one of the only buildings left standing and the only financial institution that could still operate. The Old Mint became a refugee village and distributed aid to those who had lost everything.

As fire devastated the city, the Old Mint was saved by the quick and courageous work of the San Francisco Fire Department, a tradition the San Francisco Fire Department has maintained throughout its long and distinguished history. Like San Francisco, the Old Mint quickly rebuilt itself from the devastation of the 1906 earthquake; and, by 1934, the Old Mint had housed one-third of all gold and coin money for many nations, ranging from Japan and China to the Philippines and most nations of Latin America.

In 1937, the San Francisco Mint moved to its current facility, but the Old Mint remained under the Department of the Treasury until 1957, and the magnificent structure lay in proverbial mothballs until 1973 when the San Francisco Historic Society started renovations on the Old Mint to restore it to its previous grandeur.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a cosponsor and strong supporter of this important legislation that would allow the Old Mint to become a museum, showcasing the importance of the Mint in the history of the City of San Francisco. I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1953, the ''San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin Act,'' introduced by the gentlelady from California, and urge its immediate passage.

It is often said that coins tell the history of a country, and of the world. If this is so, Mr. Speaker, mint facilities tell the history of coins, from the most modern mass-production mints such as the United States Mint plants in Denver and Philadelphia, back to the earliest mint, thought to be in the Kingdom of Lydia, which is modern-day Turkey. Greeks living there began using a system of weights for trade in 2,500 B.C. But in 700 B.C. merchants started making punch marks on lumps of metal so they could trade without weighing the metal for each transaction.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to pick one mint to focus on to understand the history of coins in this country, it would probably be the San Francisco Old Mint.

The Old Mint at San Francisco, known as the Granite Lady, has seen 130 years of this country's history, from the day it opened in 1874 until its official closing as a production mint in 1937, and subsequently as offices for the United States Mint. More recently during a roughly 20-year span it was a Treasury-operated coinage museum—starting with a Nixon-era renovation and ending in the mid-'90s because of cost concerns mostly related to upgrades that would be needed to withstand earthquakes.

Mr. Speaker, this is the second U.S. Mint production facility built in San Francisco, the first having been built in 1852, right after the great California gold rush of '49, and the third being the one that operates there today. The Old Mint, known as the Granite Lady, was designed by the architect A.B. Mullett, who also designed the Treasury Department's headquarters and the Old Executive Office Building here in Washington. At one point, the building made half of the circulating coins produced in the U.S., and held a third of the Treasury's gold reserves.

But perhaps the most notable point in its history and one to which many of us can relate today, came after the Great San Francisco Earthquake of April 18, 1906, and the fires that followed. The Granite Lady was saved from the raging fire by Treasury Department employees and the U.S. Army with a single, one-inch hose, saving the equipment and $200 million worth of gold inside. With all of the city's banks destroyed, the Mint building became the city's financial center. The building became the holder and disburser of the relief fund formed for the city, was the only point of payment to and from the city, and made all of the payments into the city. With memories of the recent hurricanes on our mind, I'm sure we can all imagine how important the Granite Lady was to the rebuilding of San Francisco.

The commemorative coins that would be issued under this legislation would be available next year, in suitable recognition of the 100th anniversary of that event.

The history of the building since it ceased being a Mint facility is less glorious. While operating as a museum, it was damaged by at least one earthquake, in 1989, and was said to be too expensive an operation for Treasury to keep open. It finally closed in 1995, with its exhibits sent off to other museums or back to those who had lent them.

Now, a new project to earthquake-proof the building, renovate it and open museums—on San Francisco and on the Gold Rush, as well as a numismatic museum—has gained momentum, and the surcharges on the sales of gold and silver commemorative coins authorized in this legislation will add millions to that important project. I will note that while Greeks were the first producers of coins, Romans were the first to collect them. Romans initially prized Greek coins, especially the older issues, but they later collected their own coins. Now, many Americans, while collecting foreign coins, are proud to collect U.S. coinage, from the early days down through the 50-State quarters and, I hope soon, the Presidential dollars. A coinage museum in this grand old building would be a boon to collectors, teachers, and students.

Mr. Speaker, this proposal is an excellent idea for a commemorative coin. It has received the required two-thirds co-sponsorship of House members, and if enacted will proceed at no cost to the taxpayer. I urge its immediate passage.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, October 25, 2005.

Hon. WILLIAM M. THOMAS,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THOMAS: I am writing concerning H.R. 1953, the ''San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin Act,'' which was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Financial Services on April 28, 2005. It is my expectation that this bill will be scheduled for floor consideration in the near future.

As you know, Section 7 of the bill establishes a surcharge for the sale of commemorative coins that are minted under the bill. I acknowledge your committee's jurisdictional interest in such surcharges as revenue matters. However, I request that your committee forego action on H.R. 1953 in order to allow the bill to come to the floor expeditiously. I appreciate your cooperation in so doing, and agree that your decision to forego further action on this bill will not prejudice the Committee on Ways and Means with respect to its jurisdictional prerogatives on this or similar legislation. I would support your request for conferees on those provisions within your jurisdiction should this bill be the subject of a House-Senate conference.

I will include a copy of this letter and your response in the Congressional Record when this bill is considered by the House. Thank you again for your assistance.

Yours truly,

MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC, November 4, 2005.

Hon. MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN OXLEY: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1953, the ''San Francisco Old Mint Commemorative Coin Act,'' which was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Financial Services on April 28, 2005.

As you noted, the Committee on Ways and Means maintains jurisdiction over matters that concern raising revenue. Section 7 of H.R. 1953 establishes a surcharge for the sale of commemorative coins that are minted under the bill, and thus falls within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means. However, in order to expedite this bill for floor consideration, the Committee will forgo action. This is being done with the understanding that it does not in any way prejudice the Committee with respect to the appointment of conferees or its jurisdictional prerogatives on this bill or similar legislation.

I appreciate and agree to your offer to include this exchange of letters on this matter in the Congressional Record during floor consideration.

Best regards,

BILL THOMAS,
Chairman.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, one can see that this is a strong bipartisan bill that deserves the support of every one of our colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1953, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1100

RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING CONTINUING DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYERS OF MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THE OTHER RESERVE COMPONENTS

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 302) recognizing and commending the continuing dedication and commitment of employers of the members of the National Guard and the other reserve components who have been mobilized during the Global War on Terrorism and in defense of the United States, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 302

Whereas as of early November 2005, more than 460,000 members of the National Guard and the other reserve components have been mobilized for active duty since September 11, 2001, leaving their families to protect the United States in the Global War on Terrorism or to support hurricane disaster relief operations;

Whereas during this period of increased mobilization and deployment, employers in the spirit of patriotism have maintained job security for those mobilized reserve-component members and their families;

Whereas the Civilian Employment Information Program of the Department of Defense, a database program implemented by the Department of Defense as of March 31, 2004, to identify employers of the 1,100,000 members of the National Guard and the other reserve components, will enable the Department of Defense to improve communication with the employer community and target support and render assistance to employers of reserve component personnel who are identified for mobilization;

Whereas employers of all sizes understand that the predictable mobilization and deployment of members of the National Guard and the other reserve components are the keys to building and maintaining employer support;

Whereas the employer community continues to work with the Department of Defense to show its support for the National Guard and the other reserve components and to better understand and adhere to the obligations spelled out in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act; and

Whereas the employer community recognizes that the missions and duties of members of the Armed Forces both abroad and in securing the homeland will be necessary: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the employers of members of the National Guard and the other reserve components deserve the Nation's sincere recognition and gratitude for their sacrifice and strong support of the goals and struggles of the United States during the Global War on Terrorism and in support of hurricane disaster relief operations;

(2) those distinguished employers of the members of the National Guard and the other reserve components who have gone above and beyond the obligations and requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act deserve the Nation's commendation; and

(3) the Secretary of Defense should continue to develop long-term strategies to maintain a high level of support between the Department of Defense and employers of members of the National Guard and the other reserve components by—

(A) continuing to build and maintain the Civilian Employment Information Program database of the Department of Defense implemented by the Department of Defense as of March 31, 2004;

(B) continuing to work with employers to build a more predictable system for the mobilization and demobilization of members of the reserve components; and

(C) encouraging officials of the Department to actively seek opportunities to address employer groups on future mobilization plans and future roles of the reserve components.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 302.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of H. Res. 302.

Mr. Speaker, since September 11, 2001, we have been a changed nation. The horrific events of that day in New York, in our Nation's capital and over the skies of Pennsylvania changed us as a people that day. We became a nation at war, and the defense of our homeland became of top priority.

Our uniformed young men and women answered the call, but in addition to these soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and corpsmen, more than 460,000 members of the National Guard and other Reservists have been mobilized for active duty over the last 2 years. Their sacrifice and assistance has been essential in our fight for freedom.

Now it is important to remember that it is not only on foreign soil or in defense of our Nation against terrorism that we have all benefited from the sacrifice of these men and women. Just weeks ago, as we all saw when natural disasters devastated our gulf coast region, Reserve personnel and National Guard components were at the forefront of relief and rescue efforts.

While each of us benefits from the sacrifice of these men and women called to service, it is sometimes too easy to forget the contribution made by behind-the-scenes heroes, that is, the employers and business owners, many of whom are small businesses who employ these Guardsmen and Reservists.

I am sure that each of us has heard in our towns and communities, the businesses who employ Guard and Reserve have gone above and beyond what is required to support our troops and ensure that their jobs are waiting for them when they return. As we honor the service of our men and women, also we should commend the patriotism and effort of all those who provide them their living.

I would also take this opportunity to commend the Department of Defense for bringing its Reserve civilian employer information database online this year. This system represents the culmination of a year-long effort to establish a Department of Defense-wide system to capture and understand who employs the 1.2 million members of the seven Reserve components. I would urge the Department of Defense to continue to develop this system and other long-term strategies so that we can maintain the historic level of support between the department and the employers of our Reservists.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of this week we will honor our Nation's veterans. As we do so, it is equally fitting to honor our Nation's Armed Forces and Reserves as we do today. I commend those on the homefront who have given so much in their support.

I thank my colleague for sponsoring this resolution and ask my colleagues that it be adopted.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and commend my colleagues from Texas and California for offering the resolution today.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure there is not one of us in the House of Representatives that has not been impacted by one of our Guard and Reserve units being called up and mobilized in regards to the operations ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of us are terribly proud of the tremendous sacrifice and courage and service that has been exhibited by our Guard and Reserve units throughout the country.

Recently, I had a chance to return to Iraq for my third trip in country. It is invaluable experience in getting a firsthand account in regards to the ongoing operations, the progress that is being made, what is working and perhaps, more importantly, what is not working. The time that we were able to spend with our troops on the ground is time well spent because they do tend to tell us like it is, what is working, what is not, what we need to improve upon in regards to the policy of what is taking place.

But having gone to Iraq now on three separate occasions, I can honestly state that nothing has made me prouder to be an American than seeing our troops in uniform there performing their duties. They are so well-trained, so well-motivated. They are, in short, the best our Nation has to offer.

Yet, their service to our country would be made much more difficult if they did not receive the support from back home, first and foremost from their families and loved ones, who also have to endure extreme sacrifice and hardship by allowing them to serve for extended periods of time overseas, typically 1 year boots-on-the-ground in theater like Iraq today. But there is another component to this, another entity that oftentimes gets overlooked, and that is what this resolution today speaks to.

It is the countless employers out there that have to, by law, a law that Congress has passed, allow them to serve our country while keeping their jobs open and safe back home. It is one of those items that people tend not to think too much about, but it does go to alleviate a lot of the concerns that our serving Guard and Reserve units have, and that is maintaining financial security for the families back home and knowing that when they do return from serving our country there will be a position for them at their place of employment.

In Wisconsin, we have had two companies last year that were recognized for their outstanding service to the Guard and Reserve employees that they have. One is Harley Davidson. The other was Schneider Trucking, located up in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Every year there is a process to try to recognize some of these companies throughout the country that are going above and beyond in regards to their support for Guard and Reserve units, and we commend them here today with this resolution.

In the congressional district that I represent in western Wisconsin, Mr. Speaker, we have had numerous National Guard units who have been called up. This past week we have the 700-member 128th Infantry Guard, who are returning home from their 1 year tour in Iraq, and there is no more happy occasion to attend than the reunion ceremony of those troops when they step off the plane, being reunited with their families for the very first time in a long time.

Beyond the 128th, we are hoping to be able to welcome home soon the 1158th Transportation Guard unit in western Wisconsin, hopefully within the next few weeks. We have also had the 32nd, the 229th, the 652nd, the 829th Engineering Guard units who were called up, gone through their training, deployed and served admirably over in Iraq.

Again, when they come home they face periods of transition, some difficult, some not so difficult, but the one thing that they should not have to worry about is knowing that there is a job for them remaining, that they gave up in order to serve our country. That is why I think this resolution commending their employers is very important today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my great friend from California (Mr. POMBO), the chairman of the Resources Committee.

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to show my appreciation for the National Guard, the Reserves and their employers. This resolution, H. Res. 302, recognizes those employers who accommodate the 1.1 million members of National Guard and other Reserve components. They make it possible for our country to be protected and defended by our patriot volunteers.

This resolution acknowledges all employers from the small-town family business to the public sector that have

provided a stable job to more than 460,000 members of the National Guard and Reserves who have been called to duty since September 11, 2001. These employers have provided our Reservists security in payment, health care and benefits.

Reservists have been called up to serve in great numbers in order to assist with natural disaster relief on the homeland or in support for the global war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I am proud to say that my district is home to recipients of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. This award was created to recognize employers who have provided exceptional support to Reservists.

One recipient of the Employer Support Freedom Award, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, has locations throughout my district from Pleasanton to Stockton and my hometown of Tracy. Enterprise received recognition for extending full salary and benefits for the entire length of mobilization, regardless of how much they receive in military pay.

I would also like to mention the sacrifice of Give Every Child a Chance, a nonprofit located in Manteca, California. One of their employees, Oscar, is a military policeman in the Army Reserves. Oscar has served his country in Iraq and in Egypt for a total of 16 months. While Oscar was serving in Egypt, they temporarily replaced him with existing staff. They wrote to me that ''While it was a very chaotic month, we knew that when we hired Oscar he had a commitment to serve our country, and we accepted that commitment as part of our dedication to the United States of America.''

National Guard members and members of Reserve Forces comprise about 46 percent of our total available military manpower. With such a significant proportion of our Nation's defense dependent upon those who maintain careers in addition to their military service, a cooperative relationship between servicemen and -women and their employers is indispensable.

The support for a healthy relationship has been prevalent from the United States Chamber of Commerce and the local chambers throughout my district. I would like to commend the Department of Defense, specifically the employers' support of the Guard and Reserve, for their cooperation with civilian employees.

Other strong supporters include SBC Communications, Incorporated, and veterans groups like the American Legion.

Our Guard, Reserves and their families sacrifice a great deal in the defense of our country. Please join me in recognizing their employers by supporting the passage of H. Res. 302.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my good friend from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 302. This resolution recognizes and commends the continued dedication and commitment of employers of the members of the National Guard and the other Reserve components who have been mobilized during the global war on terrorism.

I agree wholeheartedly with the sentiments of this legislation and firmly believe that it is the duty of us at home to support the brave men and women who are serving their country overseas.

Many of the 433,000 Reservists and members of the National Guard that have been mobilized left behind not only their family and friends, but also their careers. Therefore, it is important that we do all that we can to ensure that those jobs are there for them when they return.

I also would like to give special thanks to the employers located in my district and my State that the Illinois National Guard has commended for rising above and beyond the call of duty. Some of the companies in the Chicago area singled out by the Illinois National Guard include Hershey Foods, United Airlines, Motorola, Abbott Laboratories, Boeing, Frito Lay, the Chicago Police Department, the Arlington Heights Fire Department, the Buffalo Grove Police Department, ABN AMRO, Cardinal Health, Mackie Consultants, Mitchell Aircraft, Grainger, the Oak Park Police Department, United Parcel Service, the DuPage County Sheriff and the State of Illinois, to just name a few.

So, again, I strongly support this legislation and urge its passage.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), my good friend from the Education Committee.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Texas for the time.

I rise in support of H. Res. 302 and commend the thousands of American businesses for their exceptional support of the employees who voluntarily serve in the National Guard and Reserve. These brave men and women risk their lives to protect our way of life, and the fact that their communities are standing by them and their family is a tremendous statement of gratitude for their service.

In my home State of Delaware, members of the Army and Air National Guard have set an extraordinary example for the rest of the country, with one of the highest national percentages of personnel volunteering for deployment in the global war on terror. These men and women have flown missions and provide support in places all over the globe, spending months away from their loved ones in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf region, I am proud to say that the Delaware National Guard was among the first units on the ground, responding with airlift, security personnel and medical supplies.

On October 15, the State of Delaware was among several employers recognized by the Secretary of Defense for their outstanding support of Guardsmen and their families.

As a former Governor in Delaware, I can tell my colleagues that the vocal and active support from our community for the National Guard and Reserve is a long-standing tradition.

□ 1115

Our loyal Chamber of Commerce has a strong relationship with the Guard, and together they have worked diligently over the years to educate businesses and build employer support for our citizen soldiers.

As Veterans' Day approaches and we honor those who served and are currently serving in missions around the globe, it is essential that we recognize the millions of employers, large and small, who continue to ensure that mobilized employees and their families are taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, American businesses have always stepped up when our Nation needs them the most. Today, I commend them for their commitment to our military families and encourage all employers to support the brave men and women who defend our freedom day in and day out.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleagues are aware that back in 1994 we did pass the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, which is to protect the National Guard and Reservists and others called up to serve their country. It requires that employers hold jobs for employees when serving abroad, as well as retain some basic benefits for them.

I am also sure my colleagues are aware that many companies have stepped up and gone above and beyond the call of duty. In fact, a recently released GAO report acknowledged that many of the employers exceed the minimum requirements set forth in law. For example, more than 26 percent of the selected Reservists are receiving their salaries or differential pay, 32 percent get medical benefits not required by the law, and 30 percent get some other benefit above and beyond the legal requirements. I commend those companies that see the necessity to step up and make that extra effort to alleviate a lot of the concern that our Guard and Reserve units have.

I have two companies in my congressional district in western Wisconsin in particular that I would like to recognize: Ashley Furniture, which is a large furniture manufacturing company that has many Guard and Reservists employed. They have stepped up by offering the differential pay to those Guard and Reservists, as well as Mathy Construction, who is doing the same exact thing.

Our good friend and colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), has offered H.R. 838 that I would

like to recognize on the floor today. This is a differential pay legislation that would require the Federal Government to pick up the pay difference that the Guard and Reservists are receiving as active military compared to what they would have normally received, and it offers tax incentives to reimburse the companies who are doing this on their own. I think it is worthy legislation, worthy of our support.

Finally, I would like to point out there is one segment of employment that has been particularly hard hit by the call-up of our Guard and Reserves, and that is the first responder units in our congressional districts. Many of the Guard and Reserve units are coming from first responders, whether it is the police or sheriff departments, fire departments, in short, our civilian warriors. They seem to be particularly hard-pressed during these trying times by allowing their workers to go and serve our country.

That has had an impact on the services they are able to provide, because they are giving up some of the most qualified and hard-working employees to do these services for us back in our congressional districts. So I just want to point that out during the resolution discussion today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments. He is right on target. Our guys are doing a great job out there, and most of them are civilian warriors.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER), whose husband was Air Force active and later in the Guard, so she has some knowledge of this subject.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman sincerely for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, nearly half a million Americans have served in our National Guard since the beginning of the war on terror. A half million fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, a half million people so dedicated to protecting our Nation, protecting our families that they have sacrificed time with their own families. This is a half million people willing to confront America's enemies face to face.

Mr. Speaker, none of those great patriots would be able to serve our Nation without the incredible support and the sacrifice of those back home. For each man and woman deployed by the Guard, there is an employer who must operate without an employee. There is a company that must do business and meet its challenges without a member of its team. There is a boss who must get by without his full staff, even though he or she is faced with intense competition and unyielding deadlines.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to see our American businesses answering the call and serving their country by supporting our Guard. They are selflessly going about their business with a half million fewer workers, and they are doing so without complaint. They are setting an example for future generations by loyally holding those positions open at the same level of pay and with the same level of benefits for when our proud men and women, our Guardsmen return home. American employers are proving that their relationship with the National Guard is as strong and as important as ever. They are proving that the men and women who serve the United States proudly should be well served by our country.

My hometown of Harrison Township, Michigan, is also very proud to be the hometown of Selfridge Air National Guard Base. I have watched as literally thousands and thousands of National Guard members have deployed from Selfridge in defense of America, and I am proud to say that I have also seen countless Michigan employers ensure that Guard members are taken care of when they return home.

I strongly support House Resolution 302, because it is time we in the Congress, here in the House of Representatives, formally recognize the great work and the great sacrifice of American businesses, those who employ our Guard and Reserve members. Though they serve our Nation quietly and nobly, these companies deserve a profound and enthusiastic thank you from their government.

The men and women who have served and now serve our Nation in the Armed Forces make an incredible sacrifice, and this Veterans' Day week this resolution is especially appropriate in an important recognition that their friends and loved ones and their employers back home are sacrificing, too.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my good friend from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 302 and appreciate the efforts of the gentleman from California and our distinguished war hero who just has given me this time.

Many employers have gone above and beyond what the law requires of them, either by making up the loss in income that may occur when their employee is called to active duty or through a variety of other initiatives that recognize this special burden our National Guard and Reservists take upon themselves. Quite simply, those employers who are already recognizing the sacrifices of the Reserve components deserve our sincere praise.

But this body can go further, as Representative KIND points out. We should enact incentives through tax credits for private employers to make up the pay gap; and the Federal Government, the largest single employer of the citizens who make up the Guard and Reserve, should match the examples set by employers throughout this country and pay the difference when a citizen soldier experiences a loss of salary when he or she is activated.

Congressmen LANTOS, GRAVES, MCGOVERN, and my legislation would do exactly just that, and I hope this body would consider it soon. Again, I support this resolution, I thank the gentleman from California, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. In closing, I want to again thank my colleagues from California and the gentleman on our committee from Texas for offering this resolution. I encourage our colleagues to adopt it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that we need to really recognize our guys that are fighting for this country. The Reserve and the Guard are a major part of the effort today.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of House Resolution 302. This resolution recognizes and commends employers of members of the National Guard and other reserve components who have been mobilized during the global war on terrorism.

This resolution, if passed, would urge the Department of Defense to continue to develop long-term strategies to maintain a high level of support between these conscientious employers and to thank these employers for going above and beyond what is required by law.

I would like to commend the Chairman for bringing this outstanding resolution to the floor today. I am a co-sponsor of this resolution and H.R. 838, The Hope at Home Act. I strongly believe that men and women who choose to serve their country should not be punished for their service by having to leave their current job without financial support. That is why I have co-sponsored legislation that would give tax credits of 50 percent of an employee's compensation to businesses that continue to pay a guardsman or reservist who gets called up to active duty.

In particular, I would like to extend a special thanks to those patriotic employers in America that eliminate this pay gap for their workers by continuing to pay them the difference between their civilian salary and their military pay when mobilized. Nearly ⅓ of reservists have this benefit from their employer.

We should only ask so much sacrifice from those who are so willing to give up their lives to serve the cause of American freedom. Financial ruin should not be one of those sacrifices. I will continue to work on behalf of the National Guard and Reserves for better and more equitable treatment.

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to show my appreciation for the National Guard, the Reserves, and their employers, This resolution, H. Res. 302, recognizes those employers who accommodate the 1.1 million members of the National Guard and other reserve components. They make it possible for our country to be protected and defended by our patriot volunteers.

This resolution acknowledges all employers—from the small-town family business to the public sector—that have provided a stable job to more than 460,000 members of the National Guard and Reserves who have been

called to duty since September 11, 2001. These employers have provided our reservists security in payment, healthcare and benefits.

Reservists have been called up to serve in great numbers in order to assist with natural disaster relief on the homeland or in support for the global war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I am proud to say my district is home to recipients of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. This award was created to recognize employers who provide exceptional support to reservists.

One recipient of the Employer Support Freedom Award, Enterprise Rent-a-Car has locations throughout my district from Pleasanton to Stockton and my hometown of Tracy. Enterprise received recognition for extending full salary and benefits for the entire length of mobilization—regardless of how much they receive in military pay.

I would also like to mention the sacrifice of Give Every Child a Chance, a non-profit located in Manteca, California. One of their employees, Oscar, is a military policeman in the Army Reserves. Oscar has served his country in Iraq and then in Egypt for a total of 16 months. While Oscar was serving in Egypt, they temporarily replaced him with existing staff. They wrote to me that, ''[while] it was a very chaotic month, we knew when we hired Oscar he had a commitment to serve our country, and we accepted that commitment as part of our dedication to the United States of America.''

National Guard members and members of Reserve forces comprise about 46 percent of our total available military manpower. With such a significant proportion of our Nation's defense dependent upon those who maintain careers in addition to their military service, a cooperative relationship between service men and women and employers is indispensable.

This support for a healthy relationship has been prevalent from the United States Chamber of Commerce, and local Chambers throughout my district. I would like to commend the Department of Defense, specifically the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve for their cooperation with civilian employers.

Other strong supporters include SBC Communications, Inc. and veterans groups like the American Legion.

Some employers in California's Eleventh Congressional District giving benefits to reservists are: A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc, Albertson's, Allstate, Bank of America, Best Buy, Cingular Wireless, Citigroup, Contra Costa County, County of Santa Clara, Dow Chemical Company, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Exxon Mobil, Federal Express, Harley Davidson, Home Depot, Lockheed Martin, McDonald's Corp., National Park Service, (Contra Costa County) Office of the Sheriff, Oracle, PG&E Corp., Safeway, SBC Communications Inc., Sears & Roebuck, UPS, State of California, Staples, Sybase, Inc., Target, TGI Friday's, TJ Maxx, U.S. Postal Service, and Verizon.

Additionally, the resolution has received strong support from: U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Legion of California, Brentwood Chamber of Commerce, Brentwood VFW Post 10789, Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce, Lodi Chamber of Commerce, Manteca Chamber of Commerce, Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce, San Ramon Chamber of Commerce, Stockton Chamber of Commerce, Air Force Sergeants Association, Association of the United States Army, Tino Adame Commander Karl Ross Post, 16, Give Every Child A Chance, American Legion, John Butler CTCS USN (retired), Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Fleet Reserve Association, The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, PG&E, General Mills, and SBC Communications, Inc.

I would request that a list of more businesses and public entities recognized by the U.S. Chamber and ESGR be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Our Guard, Reserves and their families sacrifice a great deal in the defense of our country. Please join me in recognizing their employers by supporting passage of H. Res. 302.

The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award was instituted in 1996 by Secretary of Defense William Perry under the auspices of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The award was created to publicly recognize American employers who provide exceptional support to their employees who voluntarily serve the nation in the National Guard and Reserve.

The 2005 Recipients are:

Alticor, Inc., formerly Amway, provides exceptional support that includes pay differential and continuation of benefits for up to one year when an employee is mobilized.

Citizens Financial Group is a catalyst for employer support within its many Rhode Island communities. With an expanded military leave and benefit program, which includes pay differential and extension of benefits for up to one year, Citizens grants up to five consecutive days of paid leave when a spouse, domestic partner of child is activated for military service.

Eaton is a diversified industrial manufacturer that continues to provide full pay and benefits to their employees who are mobilized for the duration of their service. This is in addition to their compensation that is received from the military.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car's connection to the U.S. military goes all the way back to Jack Taylor, who in 1957 founded the company and named it after one of the U.S. Navy aircraft carriers he served aboard as a naval aviator—the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. Enterprise shows its true loyalty to its employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve by extending full salary, regardless of military compensation, and benefits for the entire length of mobilization.

IDACORP is a leading northwest employer that provides full benefits and pay differential for the entire duration of military service. IDACORP has also funded extensive family outreach programs in communities of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon when massive mobilizations have occurred. This funding provides for a $250.00 travel voucher for over 3,000 activated National Guard members.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has a long a proud history of supporting its employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. The LAPD provides pay differential and continuation of benefits for the length of mobilization. Mobilized employees also continue to receive service credit, accumulated annual vacation and tenure for the duration of their military service.

The Louisiana Department of Safety and Corrections (LDSC) is the first Louisiana state agency to achieve ESGR five star status as a supportive employer of its employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

Pioneer Financial Services, Inc. is a very strong supporter of its employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. Pioneer's proactive support includes providing salary differential and benefits for up to two years, paying bonuses in advance of mobilization to assist with financial needs, and assigning a family support coordinator for the employees' families to assist with any issues that may arise during mobilization.

Ryland Homes is an advocate for service in the National Guard and Reserve and demonstrates this patriotic corporate culture by providing full benefits, to include life, health and dental insurance, and pay differential for one year.

Sears Roebuck, and Co. has a long legacy of providing support to its employees who serve in the military dating from 1916. Sears is a long-time advocate of military service, and provides pay differential and continued human resource benefits for its mobilized employees. Sears has led numerous initiatives that demonstrate its commitment to military personnel and family members, including a partnership with the National Military Family Association (NMFA).

South Dakota State University's enthusiasm, patriotism, and support for its National Guard and Reserve employees and students is outstanding. By providing differential pay for its employees and student academic progression support, SDSU leads the way in maintaining its 140-year-old legacy of providing support to members of the armed forces. SDSU provides pay differential for the length of deployment, and also provides employees 40 hours of paid personal leave for preparation of a deployment.

The State of Delaware has enacted legislation that provides deployed servicemembers with differential pay, including continued health, dental and insurance benefits for its mobilized or recalled military employees.

Toyota employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve are provided pay differential, continuation of benefits, and the use or replacement of an employee special-lease vehicle for activated Guardsmen and Reservists and their families while deployed. In 2004, Toyota Motor Sales launched its Hire*A*Hero program, an initiative to foster career opportunities for military personnel transitioning back to civilian life. In addition, Toyota received agreement from 1,422 Toyota and Lexus dealers from across America to provide support above and beyond the requirements of the ESGR 5 Star Statement of Support program to their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

USAA continues to show great care and concern for their National Guard and Reserve employees and their families. Employees who are mobilized receive pay differential and continuation of benefits for up to 2 years. USAA has initiated a variety of military support programs, including Operation Keep in Touch, which was designed to keep deployed employees connected to their coworkers. USAA also provides its activated Guard and Reserve employees with a Deployment Preparedness Kit, which contains a comprehensive guide to assist military members with their leave of absence.

COMPANY INFORMATION FROM U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS

Con-Way Transportation Services, Inc. provides healthcare benefits for their employee/dependents for one year for regular employees serving active military service.

United Technologies Corp. fully supports its employees who are called to duty in the U.S. military. We provide the salary differential for our U.S.-based employees for as long as they are deployed, as well as medical, dental and employee life insurance. Medical and dental benefits include coverage for dependents.

Dow Chemical Company supports U.S. military efforts with leave assistance provided to employees who are called to service. Dow pays employees' full salaries for the first eight weeks of leave. After that, Dow supplements military pay for the employees for up to five years so that they continue to receive an equivalent amount of pay. Also, medical, dental and life insurance benefits continue for employees and dependents for up to six months. Upon discharge, employees return to work a Dow in positions similar to the ones they had when they left.

On June 18, 2004, 662 Boeing employees who were called to active military duty under U.S. Sept.11-related orders each received $3,000 from the company in recognition of their service. Boeing extended the company's normal military leave policy (that normally allows for up to 90 calendar days of pay differential and benefits) to up to five years of pay differential and benefits for individuals called to active military duty under U.S. Sept. 11, 2001-related orders. Boeing's military leave package includes both pay and benefits components to help employees and their dependents.

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. has partnered with organizations such as the VFW to make certain that our fellow Americans serving our country know that America supports them.

Lockheed Martin, adopted special provisions to lessen hardships and disruption for employees called to active duty in support of the war on terrorism. Since 9/11, approximately 1,000 employees have been called up to serve in the war on terrorism and, most recently, the war in Iraq. The corporation made sure they didn't lose any pay or benefits while protecting our freedom. Additionally, they have ensured that when reservists have fulfilled their active duty obligations, they are able to return to the same or like job position they held prior to their departure.

BellSouth fully supports its employees who are members of the armed forces, and pays the difference between an employee's regular salary and what he or she is paid by the military for the duration of the employee's military leave. The company also continues health care coverage for an employee's dependents during this period.

3M salutes the men and women of our Armed Forces for their courage and service to the country. A Reserve or National Guard member who is ordered to active duty in 2003, 2004, 2005 to support the national emergency receives a pay differential (pay equal to the difference between 3M pay at base rate and military pay) and benefits (with some exclusions) for the first 18 months from the initial activation date; this policy continues to be evaluated and may be adjusted based on the current state of emergency.

Intel has longstanding commitment to military reservists. Intel provides a continuous 24 months of salary coordination. In addition to the salary coordination benefit, Intel's reservists and their families retain full health and other benefits for the duration of the leave, and enjoy a variety of support programs.

As it did in the Gulf War, Honda North America, Inc. has paid its associates serving in Iraq the difference between the associate's Honda pay and military pay for the entire time the associate is on active duty, without time limit.

Since October 2001, New York Life Insurance Company has had a military leave policy for employees who are members of the Reserves or National Guard called to military active duty.

Southern Company is proud to support its employees who volunteer for active duty in Iraq by providing those employees with full payment of the difference between their military salary and their Southern Company base salary.

Sears has supported the men and women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces since 1916. Currently, for its employees serving in the Reserves or National Guard, Sears pays the difference between the employees' Sears salary and military pay for up to 60 months. Qualified Sears employees also receive merit pay increases, incentive pay, stock options and the opportunity to participate in life, medical and dental insurance programs. In addition, Sears recently provide a $2 million grant to the National Military Family Association for unique, innovative programs that benefit military families.

Accenture was named an Outstanding Employer by the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. Accenture offers benefits beyond the requirements of the law in support of our National Guard and Reserve employees, expanding their pay differential and benefits coverage policies.

UPS has had over 1,400 employees called to active duty and we currently have 1,050 still active.

Landstar System, Inc. supports the men and women in our employ who step up to serve in America's military effort by continuing all benefits in place, including health benefits for them and their families and providing a pay differential for one year of active military duty.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 302, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1953.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

GRANT W. GREEN POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3770) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 205 West Washington Street in Knox, Indiana, as the ''Grant W. Green Post Office Building''.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3770

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. GRANT W. GREEN POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 205 West Washington Street in Knox, Indiana, shall be known and designated as the ''Grant W. Green Post Office Building''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Grant W. Green Post Office Building''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3770 authored by the distinguished gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CHOCOLA).

Mr. Speaker, this bill would designate this post office in Knox, Indiana, as the Grant W. Green Post Office Building.

As the longest serving postman in Knox history, Grant Green served the people of Knox from 1920 to 1970. For more than half a century, he refused to let anything, ''neither rain nor sleet nor snow nor dark of night,'' keep him from his appointed routes. For 23 years, he delivered mail to all houses located north of the Nickel Plate Railroad tracks, which ran through the center of town. He spent the remaining 27 years of his career delivering mail

on rural routes at a time when most homes were located on dirt or gravel roads.

Grant Green moved to Knox as a young man to raise a family, but he quickly became the quintessential public servant: hardworking, passionate about his job, and dedicated to the people in the country in which he served. He was also extremely active in the community as a 70-year member of the local Masonic Lodge. Mr. Green passed away on December 29, 1990, but will be forever remembered as one of the most dedicated citizens of the community of Knox, Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to come together to recognize the vast dedication of Grant W. Green to public service in Knox, Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Government Reform Committee, I am pleased to join my colleague in consideration of H.R. 3770, legislation designating a postal facility in Knox, Indiana, after the late Grant W. Green.

This legislation, which was introduced by Representative CHRIS CHOCOLA of Indiana on September 14, 2005, was unanimously reported by the Government Reform Committee on October 20, 2005. H.R. 3770 enjoys the support and co-sponsorship of the entire Indiana delegation.

A rural letter carrier, Mr. Green had the distinction of being the longest serving postal carrier in Knox history. He worked for the Post Office Department from 1920 until 1970. His route ran through the center of Knox and in rural areas, working for 50 years.

Mr. Green's neighbors and friends remember him as dedicated, hardworking, and passionate about his job. Nothing kept Mr. Green from delivering the mail. He was a dependable and friendly letter carrier.

Mr. Speaker, it always gives me great pleasure when we recognize the contributions of postal workers by dedicating a facility in their honor. Designating the newly opened post office in Knox after Mr. Green is a wonderful way to honor the memory of Grant W. Green, and I urge swift passage of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of representing the city of Knox in Starke County for ten years in Congress, and though it is no longer in my congressional district, it is a town that remains special to me. It is a community filled with tight-knit families who support one another through good times and bad.

What is so fitting about naming Knox's post office for Grant Green is that it is not only a tribute to the people of Knox, but to the men and women of the U.S. Postal Service.

Grant Green lived nearly his entire life in Knox where he raised his family, was a model citizen, and dedicated himself to public service.

It is that public service for which he is best known. For 50 years, he served the people of Knox as a postman.

Now, in these days of instant communication and relatively inexpensive travel, it is sometimes easy to overlook the vital role that the men and women of the U.S. Postal Service have played for our communities, especially our rural communities.

Communities such as Knox may have small populations, but they are typically surrounded by family farms. In decades past, postmen may have been the only outside contact that those families had for weeks. Their arrival and what they brought, not only in the mailbag but also in news from town to town, was vital and eagerly awaited.

For 50 years, Grant Green was the link to the outside world for many families and we honor his service today with the naming of the new Knox Post Office.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Speaker, today, the House will consider H.R. 3770, legislation to designate the newly opened post office in Knox, Indiana, as the ''Grant W. Green Post Office Building.''

Grant Green worked as a postal carrier in Knox, Indiana from 1920 to 1970, making him the longest-serving postal employee in the community's history. For 23 years, he delivered mail to all houses located North of the Nickel Plate Railroad tracks, which ran through the center of Knox. He spent the remaining 27 years of his career delivering mail on rural routes at a time most rural homes were located on dirt or gravel roads.

A native of North Judson, Indiana, Grant moved to Knox as a young boy and attended Knox High School. Grant was hired by the local post office in 1920 and he quickly became the quintessential public servant: hardworking, passionate about his job, and dedicated to the people and country he served. Twenty years later, he married Margie Gaede. Together, they raised five children, all graduates of Knox High School. Grant was active throughout the community, including his nearly 70-year membership in the local Masonic Lodge. He died on December 29, 1990 and was buried on his 50th wedding anniversary, December 31, 1990.

For more than half a century, Grant refused to let anything, ''neither rain nor sleet nor snow nor dark of night,'' keep him from his appointed routes. Naming the new post office in Knox after a local courier and pillar of the community will honor not only Grant Green, but also the hard working postal employees with whom he served. It will recognize an era unique in the American experience, and it will make a statement to future generations about the importance Knox places on a strong work ethic and public service. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support the passage of H.R. 3770, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3770.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

□ 1130

CLAYTON J. SMITH MEMORIAL POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3825) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 770 Trumbull Drive in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as the ''Clayton J. Smith Memorial Post Office Building''.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3825

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CLAYTON J. SMITH MEMORIAL POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 770 Trumbull Drive in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, shall be known and designated as the ''Clayton J. Smith Memorial Post Office Building''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Clayton J. Smith Memorial Post Office Building''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3825 authored by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY). This bill would designate this post office in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as the Clayton J. Smith Memorial Post Office Building.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

The inscription on the front of the James Farley Post Office in New York City states the unofficial motto of the United States Postal Service: ''neither

snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.''

Clayton J. Smith, otherwise known as ''C.J.'' to his friends and family, was one of these dependable couriers for the Postal Service. For 9 years, Clayton was a diligent letter carrier who worked out of the Post Office at Crafton, Pennsylvania. That was until June 23, 2003, when he was completing his route near the Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center.

He never finished his route that day. He was shockingly killed in a tragic accident. He was only 45 years old.

Among the family members by whom he was survived include his mother Jean Smith and his two sons. We wish his entire family the very best in the future and can only empathize how difficult the rebuilding of their lives has been over the last 2½ years.

It is with great somberness that I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. I sincerely hope naming the Post Office at 770 Trumbull Drive in Greentree in Clayton Smith's honor will be a meaningful tribute to his life, his family, his friends, and his colleagues in the Pittsburgh area. In so doing, we not only honor his memory but the service of all letter carriers and dedicated employers of the Postal Service.

I appreciate my Pennsylvania colleagues for joining me as cosponsors of this legislation to facilitate its advancement and thank the distinguished chairman TOM DAVIS of the Government Reform Committee for bringing this bill to the floor today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Government Reform Committee, I am pleased to join my colleague in the consideration of H.R. 3825, legislation designating the postal facility in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after the late Clayton Smith.

This bill was introduced by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) on September 19, 2005, and was unanimously reported by the Government Reform Committee on October 20, 2005. H.R. 3825 enjoys the support and co-sponsorship of the entire Pennsylvania delegation.

Clayton Smith was a postal letter carrier who worked at the Greentree-Crafton Postal facility for 9 years before he was killed on June 23, 2003. Mr. Smith was killed by a stray bullet while taking a midday break in the parking lot outside his postal vehicle. For 2 years family and friends have marked the anniversary of his death.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no better way to acknowledge the dedication and work of this postal worker than naming a facility in his honor. I urge swift passage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support the passage of H.R. 3825, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3825.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LILLIAN KINKELLA KEIL POST OFFICE

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4053) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 545 North Rimsdale Avenue in Covina, California, as the ''Lillian Kinkella Keil Post Office''.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4053

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. LILLIAN KINKELLA KEIL POST OFFICE.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 545 North Rimsdale Avenue in Covina, California, shall be known and designated as the ''Lillian Kinkella Keil Post Office''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Lillian Kinkella Keil Post Office''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4053 offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS). This bill would designate this post office in Covina, California, as the Lillian Kinkella Keil Post Office.

Lillian Kinkella Keil, a registered nurse, was one of the first airplane stewardesses hired by United Airways. Keil was happily attending to her passengers when the United States entered World War II. She decided to send a letter to the School of Evacuation in Bowman Fields, California, and within 2 weeks she was accepted. By the summer of 1943, she was in England pulling wounded and frost-bitten soldiers out of B17s returning from bombing raids over Europe.

Keil made 250 evacuation flights, including one to collect the wounded after the invasion of Normandy. Twenty-three of these missions were transatlantic, moving from one man to another, stopping blood flow, bandaging wounds, and giving medicine and comfort.

After World War II ended, Keil returned to the United Airways as an assistant chief stewardess, but her career was interrupted again by the dawn of the Korean War. In 1950, she returned to her duties as an Air Force flight nurse. During the next 16 months, Keil flew 175 air evacuations out of Korea, logging 1,400 hours of flight time.

Her experiences as a flight nurse were used as the basis for the 1953 Hollywood movie ''Flight Nurse'' starring Joan Leslie and Forrest Tucker. Her experiences in World War II and Korea ultimately resulted in her being one of the most decorated women in American military history. She was awarded 19 medals, including a European Theater medal with four battle stars, a Korean service medal with seven battle stars, four air medals and a Presidential Citation from the Republic of Korea. Lillian Kinkella Keil was a true American hero.

I urge all members to come together to honor this brave and patriotic humanitarian by passing H.R. 4053.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Government Reform Committee, I am pleased to join my colleague in consideration of H.R. 4053, legislation designating a Postal Service facility in Covina, California, after the late Lillian Kinkella Keil.

This measure, which was introduced by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) on October 7, 2005, was unanimously passed by the Government Reform Committee on October 20, 2005. H.R. 4053 enjoys the support and co-sponsorship of the entire California delegation.

Captain Lillian Kinkella Keil, a longtime resident of Covina, California, was a flight nurse for the United States Army Air Corps during World War II and the Korean War. Captain Keil flew over 400 combat evacuation missions and was one of the most highly decorated women in military history.

Lillian Kinkella Keil began her career as a stewardess with United Airlines. In 1943, she attended the Army Air Forces' Air Evacuation School near Louisville, Kentucky. She received training as a flight nurse and was involved with evacuating wounded in many missions, including operations in Normandy during D-Day invasions. She was also part of the team that followed General Patton's Army across France.

One year after the war ended in 1946, Lillian returned to United Airlines as a stewardess. She left her job 4 years later, signing up for military flight duty in the Korean War. After Korea, she returned to California, got married, had two children and became a homemaker. In 1954, the year she married Walter Keil, a Navy intelligence officer, Hollywood made a movie based on her life entitled ''Flight Nurse;'' and in 1961 her story was featured on ''This is Your Life.''

Sadly, Lillian Kinkella Keil passed away of cancer at the age of 88 on June 30, 2005. I commend the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) for seeking to honor the tremendous legacy of the late Captain Lillian Kinkella Keil. She will forever be remembered as the ''Airborne Florence Nightingale'' and the most decorated female veteran. The Keil story is an inspiration to all, and I am proud and pleased that the postal facility in Covina, California, will be dedicated in her honor. I also note that the mayor and the City Council of Covina join in support of this measure and urge its swift passage.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4053, a bill designating a post office located at 545 North Rimsdale, Covina, California, in honor of Lillian Kinkella Keil, the most decorated female veteran in U.S. military history.

The story of Lillian Keil is one of remarkable courage. Born in Arcata in Northern California, she studied to be a nurse before becoming an airline stewardess for United Airlines. In 1943, she joined the U.S. Army Air Corps (now the U.S. Air Force) as a flight nurse, where she rose to the rank of Captain. Captain Keil flew on 425 combat air evacuation missions in World War II and the Korean War. She helped load wounded soldiers onto airplanes and took part in 11 major campaigns, including the Battle of the Bulge in Normandy during World War II and the Inchon Invasion in Korea. She tended to about 10,000 soldiers while they were being flown to military hospitals. She endured hazardous conditions, sometimes sleeping on a keg of gunpowder or among medical supplies the planes were delivering to battlefields.

To a wounded soldier, Captain Keil represented hope and home. She won the hearts and touched the lives of countless service members and their families. Her life and service to our country serves as an inspiration to all Americans, particularly women serving in the U.S. military. Captain Keil was awarded 19 medals and ribbons, including: 4 Air Medals, 2 Presidential Unit Citations, 1 World War II Victory Medal, 4 battle stars in World War II, and 1 Korean Service Medal with seven battle stars. In 1954, the Hollywood movie ''Flight Nurse,'' starring Joan Leslie and Forrest Tucker, was based, in part, on her experiences. She was the honorary grand marshal of the National World War II Memorial Dedication parade in Washington, DC.

Keil was honorably discharged from the military in 1955. Her family moved to Covina in 1958, and she continued working as a nurse in emergency rooms and hospitals. After serving her country, she became an active member of the Veterans of War 8620, the American Legion Post 790, and the Chosen Few Veterans Military Organization. Captain Keil died of cancer at the age of 88 in June of this year. As a longtime resident of Covina, Captain Keil was not just a brave and self-sacrificing veteran, but she was a loving wife, a mother and a friend to many who live in the 32nd Congressional District.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in recognizing this beloved military hero. This bill is a tribute to all those who have died for our country and their families. The bill symbolizes the gratitude and admiration we have for our Nation's soldiers, who risk their lives to uphold our way of life and the American ideals of liberty, justice, and equality.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support the passage of H.R. 4053, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4053.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FAIR ACCESS FOSTER CARE ACT OF 2005

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1894) to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide for the making of foster care maintenance payments to private for-profit agencies.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1894

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005''.

SEC. 2. FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS TO PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT AGENCIES.

Section 472(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 672(b)) is amended by striking ''nonprofit'' each place it appears.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER).

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1894, the Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005. This legislation has recently passed the Senate by unanimous consent.

S. 1894 makes a technical change that will ease the administration of payments to families who assist foster children. It does so by permitting the transmission of foster care maintenance payments through any agency that assists families caring for foster children in licensed settings. Current law prevents the transmission of these payments through private for-profit agencies.

As we have come to learn, public and private agencies that assist families who serve foster children play a pivotal role in promoting child safety and well-being.

□ 1145

While we allow States the flexibility to determine what agencies can best serve children, current law creates administrative burdens that deter the transmission of Federal funds through private for-profit agencies. This legislation would rectify that inequity, ensuring that all public and private agencies that assist families caring for foster children are treated in the same way.

Mr. Speaker, S. 1894 is identical to bipartisan legislation introduced by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), and I thank him for his work on this legislation. The legislation is supported by the American Public Human Services Association and the Child Welfare League of America. The Congressional Budget Office has informally estimated that the cost of this legislation would be insignificant.

Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees our Nation's children's welfare system is in need of improvement. Unfortunately, this change will only relieve one small facet of a much larger set of administrative burdens that today too often get in the way of ensuring child safety. This legislation is an important step in the right direction, and we must continue to pursue broader reforms in our Nation's child protection programs.

I thank all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their support of today's legislation. I urge all Members to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, the Fair Access Foster Care Act, makes a minor technical change designed to broaden the agencies that can recruit and reimburse foster families to include private welfare agencies. The CBO, Congressional Budget Office, concludes that this modification would impact only ''isolated cases'' within the child welfare system. So it is not any big step forward.

In short, we should not give the American people the false impression that we are actually facing the urgent and unattended needs for countless vulnerable children in this country, because we simply are not. ''Fair Access'' in the title still will not bring any access for over half of the abused and neglected children in America today. Over half of America's most vulnerable children are not merely left behind, they are left out of access, and that simply is not fair.

Make no mistake, we know how to fix it. We could start by investing in prevention, providing sufficient resources for States to work with families to prevent child abuse and neglect. We could start by investing in the people on the front lines; we would do something about the fact that the average tenure of a caseworker in the foster care system is less than 2 years.

We could start by investing in families. We could remove the obstacles in current law that prevent foster children from receiving Federal help if they are in the care of a relative because their parents' home is not safe.

We could start by investing in compassion. Thousands of children are among the victims of Hurricane Katrina, but we ignore pleas for help in spite of what we know to be true. Study after study shows that child abuse and neglect rises in the months immediately after natural disasters, particularly hurricanes; that is happening today in Louisiana. But Republicans and the administration pretend to be deaf and blind to the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter dated September 22, 2005, from the State of Louisiana. In it the State's Child Welfare Director asks the Bush administration for the same assistance that New York City received after 9/11, to meet the needs of abused and neglected children. And that is not all. The Governor of Louisiana has asked us to help them keep foster children in safe and stable settings and provide services like mental health treatment to counteract the trauma these children endured. Louisiana's leaders asked the administration to partner with them to prevent child abuse and to keep children and their families safely together.

Who can forget the President going down to Louisiana and saying, We will do everything we can to help the people affected by this disaster? Louisiana has asked us to be an extended family in a time of need, Americans helping Americans. But 6 weeks later, the Governor is still waiting for an answer to that letter.

Children remain vulnerable, without fair access, in fact, without any access. As bad as this is, the Republican leaders want their Members to make things even worse. Sometime soon, in fact, the notice on my BlackBerry says on Thursday, the House will consider what is known as the Budget Reconciliation Act. As it stands now, Republican leaders intend to cut resources dedicated to children in foster care.

Cut, let me say it again so the Members can remember it: Cut the resources for children. They intend to reduce the number of children in low-income families eligible for Federal foster care. They intend to reduce the reimbursement for the oversight of foster care for children who live with relatives. And the Republican leaders intend to cut case management and rehabilitative services provided to foster children through the Medicaid program. If they get their way, Republican leaders will take away hundreds of millions of dollars in services for abused and neglected kids and give it away in tax cuts for the rich.

Fair access is a false hope under this Republican leadership. They would like to zero out the problem as if all these kids who need us will simply vanish.

I am not going to let that happen. Not today, not tomorrow, not the day when the so-called budget reconciliation bill comes to the floor. It is a kid-buster bill, and America is better than that. Ask anyone in Louisiana. Ask anyone in America. It is time to fund some compassion. It is time to care for Americans. Americans, not Iraqis, not Afghanis, not anybody else, Americans who need us to help them.

We are making a technical correction today that will benefit a few kids, but Republican leaders need to make a titanic correction in reconciliation or we will all go down with the ship of state. A majority party that is deaf and blind to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable children is a party that has been in power too long.

Mr. Speaker, not even the very rich would fault you and us for putting the children first. Do it while they still have a future we can save.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The material previously referred to is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES,
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana, September 22, 2005.

Re addressing Hurricane Katrina's impact on Louisiana Child Welfare Services.

AMY GRISSOM, LMSW,
Program Specialist, Admin. for Children and Families, Dallas, Texas.

DEAR MS. GRISSOM: the purpose of this letter is to outline requests for waivers of certain activities and for budgetary assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As you are aware, the catastrophic effect of Hurricane Katrina has dramatically impacted the activities the Louisiana Department of Social Services, and diminished the extent to which the Office of Community Services can implement pre-Katrina initiatives. Coupled with these effects, the state is experiencing significant changes in the public role expected of the Office for the foreseeable future as Louisiana continues its recovery and support of impacted families, children, and communities.

We note that ACF Information Memorandum ACYF–CB–IM–05–06 provides for notice to states of flexibility in regards to title IV–E funds that can assist and protect/support hurricane victims. We seek meaningful ways now to operationalize that offer of provision of flexibility through these requests. The following requests are proposed after considerable thought and assessment of the changing impact of Hurricane Katrina on Louisiana statewide, for Louisiana clients and providers, and on the Office of Community Services. The requests are grouped under two broad categories: Procedural Waivers and Requests and Budgetary Requests.

The requests are as follows:

PROCEDURAL WAIVERS AND REQUESTS

TITLE IV E CLAIMS FOR FOSTER HOME CARE LICENSING STATUS. LICENSED CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS (RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES AND DAY CARE PROGRAMS)

1. As foster homes, residential care institutions, and child-care institutions are due for relicensing, we propose to grant provisional status for up to one year provided there is documentation that the licensure record contains no concerns about the home in the previous year period. We also ask to provisionally license these providers in foster families/child care institutions who may have been temporarily displaced to another state.

Rationale: This will ease the requirements for families being re-licensed. Louisiana Office of Community Services is asking to make claims through Title IV E for such cases, for a one-year period. We want the ability to make claims for full federal participation for such activities for one year with provisionally licensed homes and facilities.

2. For new applicant homes, we propose to grant provisional licenses to new homes for the next four months that are in the process of being studied. This would preclude the need to have the health department and fire inspections since those are currently backlogged in many parts of the state.

Rationale: We propose this in order to expedite an increase of available new foster home providers to assist with the care of children coming into state custody as a result of the Hurricane.

3. We propose to grant provisional licenses to displaced foster families and provide maintenance payments, medical cards, etc., for foster children in those households as needed.

Rationale: We want to be able to quickly provisionally license displaced families so that they can provide foster care services.

Child and Family Services Plan and Program Improvement Plan

We request that the Program Improvement Plan be suspended for a period of 12 months from September 1, 2005 until August 31, 2006, without potential financial penalties. We seek relief for a one-year period from PIP reporting and related activities except those that interface with the PIP and that the Office undertakes relative to Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. If granted, we propose to renew PIP implementation on June 1, 2006 with the report interval to resume 45 days after August 31, 2006 (approximately on October 15, 2006). Restarting the PIP after the year period may require a renegotiation of the PIP (or at least a realignment or revision of much of the PIP content) before beginning and we propose that approach as well.

Rationale: There has been a dramatic data base shift that has and is occurring for Louisiana families, reporting regions, and children in care. For instance, the largest metropolitan area has been severely impacted and is now and for the next year period (at least) likely to be the smallest region of the state. Further, our Office is now impacted by the new demands for different services for the population and provider base to help implement services. The service capacity in the Orleans Region, which previously was the largest metropolitan area, is changed dramatically.

2. We propose that the 5-Year Child and Family Services Plan be suspended for one year through September 2006, without potential financial penalties. We seek relief from reporting on objectives for a one-year period.

Rationale: If granted, we propose to resume implementation on October 1, 2006 for year two initiatives, goals, objectives, and due dates. Essentially, year two of the 2005–2009 CFSP will functionally become year three of the CFSP.

Title IV E Program Improvement Plan

3. We propose that the previously negotiated time frames for the title IV–E Program Improvement Plan be extended for six

additional months, that the objectives presently due on November 8, 2005 would then be due on May 8, 2006. We further request that those time frame objectives due on February 8, 2006 would be due on August 8, 2006. This request would make the title IV–E PIP extended to an 18-month PIP rather than a 12 month PIP.

Rationale: The Office of Community Services task force work efforts to revise the residential licensing regulations have been suspended as state Licensing, the Office of Youth Development, and this Office now have staff attending to Hurricane Katrina issues, and much of the subsequent IV–E PIP outcomes are predicated on the completion of tasks due on November 8, 2005. The title IV–E PIP involved large participation and input from the Orleans area, this area is now uninhabited.

Judicial Review

4. We request presumptive title IV–E eligibility during the period of 72 hours prior to the evacuation through the time when evacuated courts in the impacted disaster areas resume normal functioning.

Rationale: The Department is seeking relief from these reviews for two reasons: the change in governmental role and expectation and the eliminated capacity to conduct reviews in the disaster impacted areas of Orleans and Jefferson Region. ACYF–CB–IM05–06 clearly acknowledges that areas ''may not have court systems that are fully functioning.'' Courts such as those formerly functioning in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes have now been closed for five weeks, and cannot have retroactive '''alternative procedures'' for judicial determinations regarding contrary to the welfare and reasonable efforts. In the absence of either our staff or courts having access to case documentation, we may not even know for whom we need to obtain these judicial determinations, much less what the removal circumstances were, e.g., we have no way of knowing how many children were in care pending continued custody hearings.

5. We request a waiver of administrative review/case review requirements pursuant to ACYF–CB–IM–05–06

Rationale: This is provided for in the referenced memorandum.

BUDGETARY REQUESTS

The following listing contains issues related to recovery from Hurricane Katrina's impact on the State of Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services to adequately operate as the public child welfare agency statewide.

1. Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) Funding—We are requesting a 35% increase in the present funding. This is requested in order to keep foster care placements stable.

Rationale: Needed to support foster and adoptive placements and residential treatment within as well as outside of the state. Entire communities in the severely affected areas of Louisiana (and neighboring states as well) will need extensive supports and services to stabilize and sustain adequate placement resources and to meet on a service continuum the needs of vulnerable children and families in the rebuilding period. Residential placements in Louisiana are currently funded by state and the SSBG, and not by title IX as is common in other states. Many of these supports will be directed at recruitment of additional foster home providers.

2. An additional federal funding allocation for clothing, personal items in the form of an special appropriated allocation for all foster children from Hurricane Katrina affected areas.

Rationale: Rationale is the same as above. Children and families in the displaced areas will need this as well.

3. Chafee Independent Family Living Program—we are requesting 35–40% increase in the allocation for the Chafee Program.

Rationale: A large number of the Independent Living programs were in the disaster impact areas and were pre-Katrina providing a large variety of independent living and young adult services as well as a large number of the provider base were located in New Orleans. Supervised apartments were destroyed or severely damaged as well as furnishings, clothing, and other critical items were lost. New supervised apartment housing wi11 have to be developed and will cost more to the state.

4. Additional funding for foster care reunification services and supports through title IV–B, parts 1 and 2 is requested. This is requested for a two-year period. Further, the state is asking assistance in regards to the required match for these funds. There is no state funding appropriation for the additional matching funding. The state is asking for a federal waiver for the requirement for state matching participation for any increase in these funding sources for services.

Rationale: Children and their biological parents may be separated by significant distances for an extended or indefinite period of time. Pursuant to federal and state child welfare law, states will remain responsible for making reasonable efforts to reunify those children with their families so long as that is the case plan goal. It is noteworthy that approximately one third of the total foster homes in the state were in the Katrina impacted areas. Louisiana does not have a sufficient number of alternative placement resources to replace these children. Children taken into custody in other states will need to be returned to Louisiana and this will result in increased strain on the limited number of available foster homes. Special provisions for recruitment and licensure are sought. It is anticipated also that as the weeks ensue that there wi11 be increases in the number of child abuse reports resulting in a further increase in the need for foster care placement resources. Due to the devastation in three major regions of state foster care population; there will be few families in those areas who will be able to consider fostering or adopting children. This will impact the requirements the state will labor under for requirements for proximity of placement to parents. Additionally, part 2 of title IV–B provides for promoting safe and stable families. This too requires expansion to expand access to mental health assessment and placement assessment services for children and families and to increase support to foster parents through service providers such as family resource centers. Title IV–B, part 2, which has been so instrumental over the past decade of providing for services to prevent removal and provide assistance with reunification, must now be allowed to address for the next 12 months (at minimum) issues of posttraumatic stress in foster children, adjustment counseling for families, grief and loss counseling, social, mental health, and placement assessments, and to put in place services to address other Katrina mental health and crisis recovery impacts of the disaster effects on families and children involved in child welfare in the state.

5. Request for approval of random moment sampling procedures for cost allocation of administrative and other costs associated with service delivery. The state is requesting that we continue to use the June 30, 2005 random moment samples for the quarter ending September 30, 2005 and for the foreseeable future (at least one year) until statistics can be reasonably obtained from and for disaster areas.

Rationale: The state has no statistical capacity for random moment sampling for the three storm impacted disaster regions. Random moment sampling cannot be conducted in these areas. Using the June 30, 2005 sample is our last pre-Katrina milepost for these statistics.

6. Request for special assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide for FEMA related replacement costs for replacement of items of foster children that were lost in the storm. The state is asking for ACF assistance with FEMA to organize a quick and easy method for foster parents to submit and receive reimbursements or payments for the items of foster children that were lost during the storm and subsequent evacuation.

Rationale: These are costs that FEMA may be able to reimburse by special arrangement. An innovative foster parent special reimbursement ''track'' is envisioned to assist these families in any state they have relocated to due to evacuation from the disaster areas. Expedited reimbursement to lessen the recovery burden on foster children is the aim of this request.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these requests to your office. We would welcome any questions or comments. A prompt reply would be appreciated.

Sincerely

MARKETA GARNER GAUTREAU,
Assistant Secretary.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank the gentleman from Washington for his support for this legislation. I appreciate the concern expressed across the aisle, but the concern is not valid. It is important that we accurately explain the policy included in the spending reform bill, what it will do.

This legislative fix would not alter Federal eligibility for foster care and adoptive assistance. Instead, it would ensure that every State uses the same eligibility criteria for receipt of Federal payments. Promoting child safety and well-being must remain the goal of these programs. And Federal law must be applied evenly in all States. We are doing just that with this policy fix.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), who is the author of this legislation.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1894, the Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005.

This legislation makes a technical change to current law, which will allow foster care maintenance payments to any public or private agency that assists families who care for foster children. This will allow for-profit agencies to operate on the same footing as all other such agencies, but States will continue to decide which agencies to use based on their best judgment about what is in the interest of the children and the families they serve.

The Fair Access Foster Care Act will ease the administrative costs to States that already elect to work with nonprofit agencies, allowing the focus and the money to be concentrated on what really matters.

Speaking for my own State, in Oklahoma there are 15 agencies that provide therapeutic foster care. Five of these agencies operate under a for-profit business model.

Mr. Speaker, I will again note that this legislation does not require any State to contract with for-profit agencies. Individual State agencies charged with the oversight of custody children will continue to create their own rules for licensing child-placing agencies within the State. This legislation is identical to legislation I authored, H.R. 3008, so I am very grateful that this legislation was scheduled for consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my gratitude to the gentleman from California (Chairman HERGER), the gentleman from Washington (Ranking Member MCDERMOTT), and also to the staff of the Ways and Means Committee for guiding this bill through the legislative process.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my thanks to my friend, Dr. Laura Boyd of Norman, Oklahoma. Dr. Boyd and I belong to different parties and have even been on the opposite sides of each other in various campaigns over the years, but we have always had the ability to work together across the aisle when it counted.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Boyd did a commendable job in raising awareness of this issue, and she was an effective proponent for this needed change in the law. She is a very big reason why we are at this point today.

I urge the Members to support the passage of this bill, S. 1894.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Houston, Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for yielding me this time, and I remain very appreciative of his longstanding interest and support on these important issues dealing with children.

Let me thank the distinguished gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE) for his work on this issue and working, of course, as he has indicated, in a bipartisan way with his constituents back home.

I think it is important to note that those of us who are on this floor and our colleagues obviously have a great concern for our children. So this reporting of the truth about the calamity and the concern about the foster care system in America should not be taken personally. We should all be moving toward trying to improve the system. And I rise in support of the Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005 simply because it is a procedural change that allows a broader response to the needs of our foster care children.

I happened to have worked in Houston with an outreach committee cochaired by myself and former Congressman Mike Andrews, who used to be a member of the Ways and Means Committee; and we worked on recruitment of foster parents, providing foster parents with more resources. And this was a decade or so ago. Unfortunately, in 2005 we have the same concerns dealing with our foster care system. It is, in fact, broken to a certain extent, and the Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005 will at least provide the access to not-for-profits to be able to channel the care of foster children, therapeutic care, how important that is, counseling and psychologists and psychiatrists, to build these lives.

But we cannot, Mr. Speaker, deny the fact that more resources are not needed in recruitment, more resources are not needed to give foster parents relaxation, R&R, so that they can come back home to take care of these children. More resources are needed in keeping siblings together, and, of course, as my colleague from the great State of Washington said, more resources are needed to stand in the way of child abuse and neglect.

Might I cite for the Members an article that says ''Record High Numbers of Children Reported in Foster Care.'' This article reports the fact that these numbers are growing and growing and growing. Let me also say that we have seen over the course of 2 months one natural disaster after another: Hurricane Rita, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Wilma, and the terrible tornado in Kentucky and Indiana. In Hurricane Katrina alone, the statistics show that 35 percent of those impacted by Hurricane Katrina will be children.

One of the things that we fail to recite and repeat on the floor of the House, Mr. Speaker, 1,000-plus individuals died in Hurricane Katrina. Many of them are the parents of children now still living with relatives or children that are missing. And the very fact that we have ignored that dilemma shows that downstream we are going to be facing huge numbers of children needing foster care.

□ 1200

In my own congressional district, we have thousands of Hurricane Katrina survivors. Many of the family members are there taking care of other people's children or their relative's children.

So the foster care concept or the structure of foster care unfortunately is a safety net for children who are without any supervision or not having their needs being taken care of because of the family dissolution and other problems. This is an important step to fix the problem to add more people into the system, but this does not, Mr. Speaker, answer the total question of building a foster care system to aid those who suffer from neglect and helping out children in these terrible times.

Mr. Speaker, I speak today in support of S. 1894, the Fair Access Foster Care Act of 2005. Therapeutic foster care is foster care for children with special medical, psychological, emotional, and social needs. These children need comprehensive support and attention, requiring a great deal of commitment and sacrifice from foster care parents. Prior to the placement of a child, a potential therapeutic foster care parent must complete a certification process that involves a background check, a training program, and at least two homestudies.

Generally therapeutic foster care children are not permitted to attend daycare and require ''line of sight'' supervision. That is, therapeutic foster care children must be in view of the foster parents at all times, except when attending school and other approved activities.

Recruiting parents to provide therapeutic foster care is a never-ending job. There are always children waiting for a match to be found. Therapeutic foster care children stay in crisis shelters for the transition period, adding a great deal of stress to their lives.

Since 1992, IV–E funds from Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have gone to partially fund both for-profit and nonprofit therapeutic foster care providers.

The problem we are facing is that recently, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) realized that due to a technicality, for-profit agencies are not eligible to receive IV–E funds from HHS. In addition, other states have come to similar realizations and made arrangements to avoid noncompliance. Unfortunately, some states are not even aware of this discrimination. S. 1894 amends the United States code to allow all therapeutic foster care agencies to receive maintenance payments from the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

The Congressional Budget Office has indicated that any costs associated with this legislation would be insignificant. S. 1894 would amend the United States code to allow all therapeutic foster care agencies to receive maintenance payments from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The Congressional Budget Office has indicated that any costs associated with this legislation would be insignificant.

In closing, there are over 500,000 children in foster care today. A large number of these children require therapeutic care. The business model of for-profit agencies should not prohibit Title IV–E maintenance cost reimbursement. Now is not the time to prevent highly qualified agencies from placing these children in safe homes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, this bill provides very limited administrative flexibility, essentially just legalizing what a handful of States are already doing with foster care. But this tiny finger of flexibility given with one hand is taken away with both hands from the same abused and neglected children in the companion legislation that this same group of Republican leaders has so enthusiastically endorsed in our committee and which it plans to foist off on the American people this week.

So extreme is the Republican demand for tax breaks and more tax breaks and more tax breaks for those at the top of the economic ladder and the multinational corporations that will not pay their fair share of the tax burden that Republicans have demanded that the same abused and neglected children that they say they would help today, would be the ones to pay the tab for these tax cuts.

Those across America who realize that we need to be doing more for children who are physically or sexually

abused by a parent, or merely abandoned without food or support by a parent who is caught up in a drug habit, need to know that those kids need more help. They need to know that the companion legislation the Ways and Means Committee has approved for consideration in the full House this week would deny those children almost $600 million of federal support.

Most of this is taken from battered, abused, and neglected children who found a new home with a loving family member. Think about it: a grandparent who realizes their child has gone astray and they take their abused, neglected grandchild back into their family to try to give them a chance.

The only federal court, an appellate court, that has interpreted our existing federal foster care law in the case, Rosales v. Thompson, issued a decision that is so clear that the Bush administration chose not to appeal it to the United States Supreme Court. However, the Bush administration has said it will not apply the court's decision to the law in this country outside a number of Western States. Under the court's ruling, abused, neglected, and battered children who seek the safety and stability of a home with grandparents, or other relatives who are not formally licensed as foster caregivers are eligible to receive, quite wisely, federal foster care assistance.

The Republicans are now saying we should deny funding to these grandparents and other relatives that care. The would tear apart tens of thousands of families and disregard the very purpose of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, a Federal law that directs a preference be given to placements with relatives.

For some reason, after endless speeches proclaiming a concern for ''family values,'' the only families that count are those that are sitting up at the top of the economic ladder, while the families that have taken in an abused and neglected child are left behind. This companion bill is the so-called ''reconciliation'' which really ought to be spelled W–R–E–C–K, ''wreck,'' because it is a wreck for these tens of thousands of loving and caring families. It is speeding through this Congress and speaking volumes about how much ''family values'' really count up here.

To say that the Republicans would literally take food from the mouths of babes to fund tax breaks for the rich might sound like partisan rhetoric, but if you watch this Congress this week, that is exactly what you will see.

This very year, President Bush's Office of Management and Budget rated the federal child support program among the highest and most efficient programs in the Federal Government; and yet, in the same bill in which they plan to take away about $600 million from families caring for abused and neglected children, they plan to deny federal support for child support enforcement, as amazing as that might seem.

There has been a 75 percent increase in child support collections from deadbeat dads since fiscal year 1996, adding up to $21.2 billion, a big figure, but it translates, just like these monies for the foster families, into hundreds of thousands of small amounts that put food on the table and allow kids to have the clothes to go to school.

Apparently, the folks that are running this place, the Administration and the House of Representatives do not know what it is like to be a single mom out there trying to get kids through school or to be a single grandmother having to start a second family to care for a grandchild while trying to keep them out of trouble and struggling to put food on the table. A few hundred dollars a month—whether it is from a deadbeat dad or through this foster care program for abused and neglected families—can make a big difference. That little bit of money makes the difference between a child who has a future and a child who ends up just like the abused and neglected parent that placed them in this horrible situation.

And, in the same bill that is a companion to this, House Republicans go even farther than cutting off support for programs that address deadbeat dads and abused and neglected children, they also cut child care funding to the tune of about $500 billion. Those funds are cut from those who are struggling to get off welfare and will result in 270,000 fewer children of poor working families being able to get access to child care in the next 5 years.

This Republican reduction in our federal investment in children will cost us millions and billions of dollars in the long run, but, most importantly, it will deny too many children in this country the opportunity to achieve their full, God-given potential. It is wrong. And while this minor piece of uncontested legislation ought to be approved today, we need to reject this attempt by extremists in this Congress to place all the burden of their fiscal mismanagement on the most vulnerable people in our society.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) brought out a harmless little bill here today, and some may wonder why we have taken so much time to whale away on the Budget Reconciliation Act which is coming down the road.

The fact is that this issue of child welfare is an issue that we have absolutely neglected in this House, and we are talking about the whole issue of child care.

This one little bill here has the title, which is the part that offends me: ''Fair Access to Foster Care Act.'' Well, advertising like that would be out of order, because that is misrepresenting what this is about. This is a technical corrections bill. But the Republicans want to come out here, and everything is a PR piece: ''Fair Access to Foster Care.'' You do not intend to give to anyone. You are not giving it in this bill. You are not going to give it on Thursday in the reconciliation bill. There is simply no concern about foster children in this Republican leadership.

When they send people like the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER), a good, solid citizen, out here to defend this as ''fair access to foster care,'' people will say, well, I voted for the Fair Access to Foster Care bill, as though voting for a title meant something.

Mr. Speaker, this administration is 6 weeks without picking up a pen and signing a letter to help the kids in Louisiana. That is a President who is leaving people behind. That is a Congress who is leaving children behind. You are not going to get away from it with the Fair Access to Foster Care Act.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote for this bill. We will continue this discussion on Thursday when we have the Budget Reconciliation Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments on the other side of the aisle. However, almost none of what was just discussed has anything to do with what is on the floor today. The bill before us is a good one and one every Member should support. Members will soon have a chance to support needed spending reforms to reduce deficits and help balance the budget. That should be a goal for all of us.

But what we hear today from the other side of the aisle is what we always hear: one, ''no'' on any savings in Federal programs; and, two, ''no'' on commonsense reforms; but, three, ''yes'' on raising taxes on the American people. Unfortunately, it is just the same old liberal wine in the same old bottles.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us today is an important step towards improving our Nation's child protection programs. It would ensure that all public and private agencies that assist families who care for foster children are treated in the same manner. It is good legislation and would help States focus their efforts on promoting child safety and well-being.

I would like to again thank my colleagues for their work in this area, and I urge all Members to support this legislation.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on subject of the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMMONS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1894.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the motion to instruct on H.R. 3058.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE ON H.R. 3058, TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, THE JUDICIARY, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1 of rule XXII and by direction of the Committee on Appropriations, I move to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 3058) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, with a Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG).

The motion was agreed to.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR. OLVER

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Olver moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 3058, be instructed to recede to the Senate levels for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation and the revitalization of severely distressed public housing (HOPE VI) and recede to the Senate on Section 722 of the Senate amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER).

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the end of what has been a long and complicated process.

□ 1215

As we all know, the Treasury, Transportation, HUD and other agencies, commonly known as the THUD bill, has many moving parts; and while there are many issues to be addressed in the conference, I want to highlight a few today to refresh our memory.

The motion to instruct is fairly straightforward and simple. It addresses three items that deserve the body's attention. The first is funding to ensure that the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, commonly known as Amtrak, maintains its current level of service. It is funded in both bills; however, the House bill provides $1.18 billion and the Senate bill provides $1.4 billion. As you can see, it is intent of both houses of this Congress to fund Amtrak, and my motion to instruct conferees insists on sufficient funding to ensure that Amtrak can continue to provide service, make capital improvements and pay its debt.

The second item deals with the micropurchase cap. The second Katrina supplemental budget included an administration proposal to increase the micropurchase threshold from $15,000 to $250,000. This means that authorized holders of government credit cards can now charge items that cost up to a quarter of a million dollars. This is far beyond the purpose of the government card program and invites the possibility for fraud and abuse. The Senate's version of H.R. 3058, the Senate's amendment to H.R. 3058, included a provision that repeals the increase to the micropurchase threshold. My motion to instruct insists on the Senate provision that repeals the unnecessary and excessive increase to the micropurchase threshold.

And the final issue, Mr. Speaker, deals with HOPE VI. The House bill funded the program at $60 million as a result of an amendment passed on the floor. The Senate funded this important program at $150 million. The fiscal year 2005 level for this program was $142 million.

The HOPE VI program is vital to the rehabilitation of urban areas. And once again, Congress has shown its intent to support this important program, and my motion insists on its being funded at the higher level.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a simple motion that instructs the conferees to support the highest possible funding level to ensure Amtrak can maintain the current level of service; to recede to the Senate level for HOPE VI; and to recede to the Senate language in order to repeal the micropurchase cap increase that had been adopted in the second Hurricane Katrina supplemental budget earlier this fall.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

I thank my colleague from Massachusetts for his commitment to the programs in this bill and for his partnership in what has been a most interesting journey to bring this bill to a conference.

This bill is a huge compilation of government operations, public service programs and critical national infrastructure. Like other appropriations bills, our allocation and commitment to fiscal responsibility makes funding these programs a challenge. Our task was to fund well-run, effective programs to the greatest extent that we could and encourage reform in others. Two of the motions, Amtrak and HOPE VI, fall into the latter category.

Starting first with Amtrak, this is a railroad in desperate need of reform. This year alone Amtrak will carry over $120 million in funds that were provided to them by the Congress in fiscal year 2005 but not used. The DOT Inspector General, an official respected on both sides of the aisle, has informed us that $1.275 billion is sufficient for Amtrak to continue operating its existing route structure without reductions in frequency, and to dedicate sufficient resources to continue the effort to bring Amtrak-owned infrastructure to a state of good repair. Also included in this figure is $278 million to meet Amtrak's debt service obligations on its nearly $4 billion in outstanding loans.

HOPE VI is a program that is just that for many people, hope that the grant to create new public housing will actually be spent in their neighborhoods. Currently, over $2.8 billion in HOPE VI grants has not been spent. Only 37 of the 224 communities have actually seen the finished product.

For those 37 communities, HOPE VI is a terrific program, and I was a supporter of HOPE VI for that reason, because there are some good examples. However, HOPE VI is not working for the other 187.

Here is another program in desperate need of reform, and I am hopeful for that in the coming year, with whatever level of funding is provided for the program. The authorizing committees of jurisdiction will look for ways to make this program more effective.

Section 722 of the Senate bill deals with micropurchases. I believe the administration has already acted on this issue, and we are supportive of the Senate's provisions.

In the end, we recognize the challenges of reform and have not abandoned our commitment to fund good programs. We will do our best under this allocation that we have to meet to fund the priority programs, including HOPE VI and Amtrak. Again, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts and

all the members of the subcommittee for their hard work this year.

With that, I would merely announce that I would accept the motion to instruct.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Motion to Instruct Conferees to H.R. 3058, the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Act, offered by the Gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER), Ranking Democratic Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee.

In part, this motion instructs conferees to recede to the Senate levels for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, or Amtrak.

This past summer, the House approved by voice vote a bipartisan Amtrak funding amendment that the Gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE), the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroads, and I offered to H.R. 3058, the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation-Treasury Appropriations bill.

The amendment increased funding for Amtrak to $1.176 billion: $1.176 billion more than the Administration proposed in its Fiscal Year 2006 budget request and $626 million more than the House Appropriations Committee approved. It passed overwhelmingly.

The Senate followed the House's lead, but raised the bar, providing Amtrak with $1.45 billion, a difference of about $275 million.

During Floor consideration, the Senate also stripped the Senate bill of several controversial provisions regarding Amtrak, opting instead to pass a reasonable, sensible, bipartisan Amtrak reauthorization amendment, offered by Senators LOTT and LAUTENBERG, to the Budget Reconciliation bill by a vote of 93–6.

I urge that the conferees recede to the Senate level of $1.45 billion.

The fact is that this Congress time and again promotes transportation, particularly rural access to transportation. We should do no less for Amtrak.

Amtrak's opponents, however, are quick to point fingers at Amtrak's management, and claim that Amtrak doesn't deserve our support: That private corporations could run a better passenger railroad.

The truth is that a succession of hard-working and dedicated management teams at Amtrak cannot do the impossible—that is, operate our Nation's passenger rail system without a substantial level of investment from the Federal Government.

From its creation in the 1970's, the Corporation has been on a starvation diet. Lack of adequate funding and the annual threat of elimination have conditioned Amtrak to focus on survival.

Yet despite chronic underfunding, Amtrak has had its successes. According to the Amtrak Reform Board, since 2002, Amtrak has: implemented new accounting and financial reporting systems; reduced personnel by almost 5,000; developed a detailed and prioritized five-year capital plan focused on restoring the Northeast Corridor to necessary levels of reliability and safety, and on restoration of an aging fleet of rolling stock used throughout the system; terminated the mail and express operation; eliminated or truncated three long-distance routes; increased ridership from 22.5 million in 2000 to 25.1 million in 2004; and contained Amtrak's cash-operating requirement at or below $570 million.

Capital investment is up substantially: 256,000 concrete ties were installed; 104,000 wood ties were replaced; 266 miles of rail infrastructure restored; 50 undergrade bridges improved; 43 miles of signal and communications cable replaced; 116 miles of catenary hardware installed; and 19 stations and 37 substations improved.

Since 2002, Amtrak's mechanical department completed 180 remanufactures/heavy overhauls, 111 diesel locomotive overhauls, 14 electric locomotive overhauls, 31 equipment overhauls, 51 wreck repairs, and 32 baggage car modifications.

Excess equipment was sold, unprofitable services were eliminated, fares were lowered on long-distance routes to increase ridership, and a $71 million maintenance facility was opened in a joint partnership between Amtrak and the State of California.

In short, Amtrak is making great progress, even on a limited budget. Let's invest $1.45 billion in our rail passenger future and help Amtrak succeed.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Motion to Instruct Conferees.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMMONS). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLVER).

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees:

Messrs. KNOLLENBERG, WOLF, ROGERS of Kentucky, TIAHRT, Mrs. NORTHUP, Messrs. ADERHOLT, SWEENEY, CULBERSON, REGULA, LEWIS of California, OLVER, HOYER, PASTOR, Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan, Messrs. CLYBURN, ROTHMAN, and OBEY.

There was no objection.

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE ON H.R. 3010, DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1 of rule XXII and by direction of the Committee on Appropriations, I move to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 3010) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, with the Senate amendment thereto, disagree to the Senate amendment, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. REGULA).

The motion was agreed to.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT OFFERED BY MR. OBEY

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct conferees.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Obey moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the bill, H.R. 3010, be instructed to insist that the conference agreement include:

(a) Not less than $8.095 billion to adequately prepare the nation for a flu pandemic;

(b) $5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, an increase of $3.1 billion over the House bill, to help the elderly and the poor cope with rising energy prices;

(c) An additional $1.583 billion over the House bill to promote life through doing real things to reduce the pressure for abortions by making it economically easier for low-income and vulnerable women to choose to carry pregnancies to term, including increases above the House bill of $175 million for the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, $98 million for Healthy Start, $200 million for childcare, $500 million for after-school centers, $155 million for Head Start, $330 million for the Community Services Block Grant, and $125 million for Domestic Violence Prevention;

(d) An additional $476 million over the House bill to help maintain the basic health care safety net, including providing the full increase requested by the President for Community Health Centers, and keeping funding at no less than last year's level for the Healthy Communities Access Program and key health professions programs;

(e) An additional $5.5 billion over the House bill to provide meaningful educational opportunities for America's children, including a $3 billion increase over the House bill for Title 1 grants to make progress on No Child Left Behind funding promises so that low-income children can learn, a $1.6 billion increase over the House bill to meet our commitments to children with disabilities, a $100 million increase over the House bill to alleviate the impact of military dependents on local schools; and an $840 million increase over the House bill to boost the maximum Pell Grant by $200 in order to partially offset a 34% increase in college costs since 2001;

(f) An additional $439 million over the House bill to protect American workers, wages and jobs by investing in job training and worker protection programs at home and abroad, including restoring an 87% cut in funding for the International Labor Affairs Bureau at the Department of Labor; and

(g) Offsetting the cost of the above, and producing additional deficit reduction, through reductions in tax cuts for households with incomes above $1,000,000.

Mr. OBEY (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to instruct be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I reserve a point of order on the gentleman's motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The point of order is reserved.

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. REGULA) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I will not take more than 3. I simply would like

to, as a courtesy to the House, explain the motion.

For the last 2 weeks, the attention of the House has been focused on the efforts of the majority party to pass its reconciliation bill, which includes significant cuts in food stamps, in child support enforcement, in disability payments in order to pay for the tax cuts which this Congress has already largely passed. The problem that we have with that is that this bill, in effect, hits those same poor people a second time with cuts in education, health, worker protection programs that are in the bill.

The Senate appeared to give the persons interested in this bill some hope that those cuts could be avoided by adding a $3 billion financing gimmick to their proposal. But it is clear now that that provision is being discarded, and that means that the new caps that the Appropriations Committee adopted last week will eliminate the ability of the Senate to provide that extra $3 billion. That means that the only way that we can avoid that hit is to reduce the size of the tax cuts being provided to make room in the budget for some of these crucial items.

So this motion simply attempts to instruct the conferees to accept the Harkin amendment which would add $8 billion in order to pay fully for the flu pandemic work that needs to be done. It would instruct the conferees to add $3 billion to the low-income heating assistance program to take into account the huge increase in home energy prices that consumers will face this year, especially low-income consumers.

It would provide an additional $1.5 billion in programs that are meant to discourage abortion, programs such as a maternal and child health block grant, Head Start, domestic violence and numerous others, one-half billion dollars to restore health professions training, and $3 billion to put title I on a 5-year track to full funding under No Child Left Behind; $1.6 billion in additional funding for disabled and handicapped children trying to put that program on the same 5-year glide path; and one-half billion dollars in restoration for worker training and job training programs.

It would ask the conferees to support a provision which would reduce the size of the tax cuts for millionaires from an average of $140,000 to $36,000. That is still a pretty hefty cut.

Mr. Speaker, in essence, that is what the motion to instruct would provide. We are offering it because this is the last chance that this body has to reach a different set of judgments concerning budget priorities that affect the poorest and most defenseless people in this society.

POINT OF ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from Ohio continue to reserve his point of order?

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I make a point of order against the motion because it violates clause 9 of rule XXII by proposing to direct the conferees to exceed the scope of matters committed to the conference. And I ask for a ruling from the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any Member wish to speak on the point of order?

□ 1230

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, if one looks at the Budget Act, the purpose of the Budget Act was to force a Congress to get away from runaway spending and runaway deficits by forcing the Congress to confront trade-offs between spending and revenues. In fact, the Congress is being prevented from doing that and the Congress is being shielded from facing those explicit trade-offs unless amendments such as this are offered and debated fully in the House.

We recognize that funding for these programs under the budget resolution is being cut back in order to make room in that same budget resolution for the tax cuts that have been provided and to make room for further tax cuts which the majority party is talking about offering this week. If we cannot offer this kind of an amendment, then it would seem to me that the entire budget process has been intellectually corrupted and turned into a mere enforcement mechanism for majority party will rather than being used as a device to work out an explicit and forthright set of trade-offs.

I would urge the Chair to reject the point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMMONS). The Chair is prepared to rule on the point of order.

The Chair finds that the proposed instructions dwell their operative focus on matters not within the scope of the differences committed to conference by the two Houses.

On these premises, the Chair holds that the instructions do exceed the scope of conference.

The point of order is sustained.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, most reluctantly, I do appeal the ruling of the Chair, not because I have any fault with the Chair, but because this is the only opportunity this institution will have to make a different set of priority choices.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is, shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the House.

MOTION TO TABLE OFFERED BY MR. REGULA

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I move to lay the appeal on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to table.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to table will be followed by 5-minute votes on motions to suspend the rules on H. Res. 38, H. Res. 302, and H.R. 3770.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 218, nays 173, not voting 42, as follows:

[Roll No. 573]

YEAS—218

Aderholt	Gibbons	Northup
Akin	Gilchrest	Nunes
Alexander	Gillmor	Nussle
Bachus	Gingrey	Osborne
Baker	Gohmert	Otter
Barrett (SC)	Goode	Oxley
Bartlett (MD)	Goodlatte	Paul
Barton (TX)	Granger	Pearce
Bass	Graves	Pence
Beauprez	Green (WI)	Peterson (PA)
Biggert	Hall	Petri
Bilirakis	Hart	Pickering
Bishop (UT)	Hastings (WA)	Pitts
Blackburn	Hayes	Platts
Blunt	Hayworth	Pombo
Boehlert	Hefley	Porter
Boehner	Hensarling	Price (GA)
Bonilla	Herger	Pryce (OH)
Bonner	Hobson	Putnam
Bono	Hoekstra	Radanovich
Boozman	Hostettler	Ramstad
Boustany	Hulshof	Regula
Bradley (NH)	Hunter	Rehberg
Brady (TX)	Hyde	Reichert
Burgess	Inglis (SC)	Renzi
Burton (IN)	Issa	Reynolds
Buyer	Istook	Rogers (AL)
Calvert	Jenkins	Rogers (KY)
Camp	Jindal	Rogers (MI)
Cannon	Johnson (CT)	Rohrabacher
Cantor	Johnson (IL)	Ros-Lehtinen
Capito	Johnson, Sam	Royce
Carter	Keller	Ryan (WI)
Castle	Kelly	Ryun (KS)
Chabot	Kennedy (MN)	Saxton
Chocola	King (IA)	Schmidt
Coble	King (NY)	Schwarz (MI)
Cole (OK)	Kingston	Sensenbrenner
Conaway	Kirk	Sessions
Crenshaw	Kline	Shadegg
Cubin	Knollenberg	Shaw
Culberson	Kolbe	Shays
Cunningham	Kuhl (NY)	Sherwood
Davis (KY)	LaHood	Shimkus
Davis, Jo Ann	Latham	Shuster
Davis, Tom	LaTourette	Simmons
Deal (GA)	Leach	Simpson
DeLay	Lewis (CA)	Smith (NJ)
Dent	Lewis (KY)	Smith (TX)
Diaz-Balart, L.	Linder	Sodrel
Diaz-Balart, M.	LoBiondo	Stearns
Doolittle	Lucas	Sullivan
Drake	Lungren, Daniel E.	Sweeney
Dreier	Mack	Tancredo
Duncan	Manzullo	Taylor (NC)
Ehlers	McCaul (TX)	Terry
Emerson	McCotter	Thomas
English (PA)	McCrery	Thornberry
Everett	McHenry	Tiahrt
Feeney	McHugh	Tiberi
Ferguson	McKeon	Turner
Fitzpatrick (PA)	McMorris	Upton
Flake	Mica	Walden (OR)
Foley	Miller (FL)	Walsh
Forbes	Miller (MI)	Wamp
Fortenberry	Miller, Gary	Weldon (FL)
Fossella	Moran (KS)	Weldon (PA)
Foxx	Murphy	Weller
Franks (AZ)	Musgrave	Wicker
Frelinghuysen	Myrick	Wilson (NM)
Gallegly	Neugebauer	Wilson (SC)
Garrett (NJ)	Ney	Wolf
Gerlach	Northup	Young (AK)

NAYS—173

Abercrombie	Butterfield	Davis (AL)
Allen	Capps	Davis (CA)
Baca	Capuano	Davis (FL)
Baird	Cardin	Davis (IL)
Baldwin	Cardoza	DeFazio
Barrow	Carnahan	DeGette
Bean	Carson	Delahunt
Becerra	Case	DeLauro
Berkley	Chandler	Dicks
Berry	Clay	Doggett
Bishop (GA)	Cleaver	Edwards
Bishop (NY)	Clyburn	Emanuel
Blumenauer	Cooper	Engel
Boren	Costa	Eshoo
Boucher	Costello	Etheridge
Boyd	Cramer	Evans
Brown (OH)	Cuellar	Farr

Fattah
Filner
Ford
Frank (MA)
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Harman
Herseth
Higgins
Hinojosa
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson, E. B.
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kind
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Maloney
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Melancon
Menendez
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pastor
Pelosi
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sabo
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanders
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz (PA)
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Spratt
Stark
Strickland
Stupak
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Visclosky
Wasserman Schultz
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Wexler
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn

NOT VOTING—42

Ackerman
Andrews
Berman
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Conyers
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (TN)
Dingell
Doyle
Gutknecht
Harris
Hastings (FL)
Hinchey
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kilpatrick (MI)
Lee
Marchant
Meeks (NY)
Millender-McDonald
Moran (VA)
Norwood
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Payne
Poe
Serrano
Sherman
Solis
Souder
Towns
Velázquez
Waters
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Young (FL)

□ 1259

Messrs. HIGGINS, MELANCON, LARSON of Connecticut, HONDA, DOGGETT, KENNEDY of Rhode Island and Ms. MCKINNEY changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. HOEKSTRA, PETERSON of Pennsylvania, SMITH of Texas and OTTER changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to table was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 573, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Stated against:

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 573, I was caught in traffic, returning from the Virginia polls. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 573 on H.R. 3010, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

□ 1300

SUPPORTING THE ACCESSION OF ISRAEL TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMMONS). The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 38, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 38, as amended, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 391, nays 0, not voting 42, as follows:

[Roll No. 574]

YEAS—391

Abercrombie
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Bean
Beauprez
Becerra
Berkley
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd
Bradley (NH)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Carter
Case
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Chocola
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crenshaw
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cunningham
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Doggett
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Fitzpatrick (PA)
Flake
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green (WI)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall
Harman
Hart
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hostettler
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
McMorris
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Melancon
Menendez
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Ney
Northup
Nunes
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Osborne
Otter
Oxley
Pastor
Pearce
Pelosi
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanders
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz (PA)
Schwarz (MI)
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Simpson
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Sodrel
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Strickland
Stupak
Sullivan
Sweeney
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)

NOT VOTING—42

Ackerman
Andrews
Berman
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Conyers
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (TN)
DeGette
Dingell
Doyle
Gutknecht
Harris
Hastings (FL)
Hinchey
Johnson (CT)
Jones (OH)
Kilpatrick (MI)
Lee
Marchant
Meeks (NY)
Millender-McDonald
Norwood
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Paul
Payne
Serrano
Sherman
Skelton
Solis
Towns
Velázquez
Waters
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Young (FL)

□ 1307

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The title of the resolution was amended so as to read: ''Resolution expressing support for the accession of

Israel to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 574, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 574 on H. Res. 38, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING CONTINUING DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYERS OF MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THE OTHER RESERVE COMPONENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 302, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 302, as amended, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 395, nays 0, not voting 38, as follows:

[Roll No. 575]

YEAS—395

Abercrombie
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Bean
Beauprez
Becerra
Berkley
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd
Bradley (NH)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Brown (SC)
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Carter
Case
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Chocola
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crenshaw
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cunningham
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Fitzpatrick (PA)
Flake
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green (WI)
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall
Harman
Hart
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hostettler
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
Jindal
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
McMorris
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Melancon
Menendez
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Ney
Northup
Nunes
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Osborne
Otter
Oxley
Pastor
Paul
Pearce
Pelosi
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanders
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz (PA)
Schwarz (MI)
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Simpson
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Sodrel
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Strickland
Stupak
Sullivan
Sweeney
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—38

Ackerman
Andrews
Berman
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Conyers
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (TN)
Dingell
Farr
Gutknecht
Harris
Hastings (FL)
Hayes
Hinchey
Jones (OH)
Kilpatrick (MI)
Lee
Marchant
Meeks (NY)
Millender-McDonald
Norwood
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Payne
Serrano
Sherman
Solis
Towns
Velázquez
Waters
Westmoreland
Whitfield

□ 1317

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 575 on H. Res. 302, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

GRANT W. GREEN POST OFFICE BUILDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 3770.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3770, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 393, nays 1, not voting 39, as follows:

[Roll No. 576]

YEAS—393

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Bean
Beauprez
Becerra
Berkley
Berry
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd
Bradley (NH)
Brady (TX)
Brown (OH)
Brown (SC)
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Carter
Case
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Chocola
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crenshaw
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cunningham
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (FL)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
DeLay
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Fitzpatrick (PA)
Flake
Foley
Forbes
Ford
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gibbons
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green (WI)

Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall
Harman
Hart
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hinojosa
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hostettler
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Istook
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jenkins
Jindal
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Maloney
Manzullo
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinney
McMorris
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Melancon
Menendez
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Ney
Northup
Nunes
Nussle
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Osborne
Otter
Oxley
Pastor
Paul
Pearce
Pelosi
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pombo
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sabo
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanders
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz (PA)
Schwarz (MI)
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shays
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Simpson
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Sodrel
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Strickland
Stupak
Sullivan
Sweeney
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Wexler
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Young (AK)

NAYS—1

Abercrombie

NOT VOTING—39

Ackerman
Andrews
Berman
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Conyers
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (TN)
Dingell
Gutknecht
Harris
Hastings (FL)
Hayes
Hinchey
Jones (OH)
Kilpatrick (MI)
Lee
Marchant
Meeks (NY)
Millender-McDonald
Napolitano
Norwood
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Payne
Serrano
Sherman
Skelton
Solis
Towns
Velázquez
Waters
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Young (FL)

□ 1327

So (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 576 on H.R. 3770, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 576 on H.R. 3770, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I missed four votes on November 8th, 2005. Had I been present I would have voted "no" on tabling the Obey motion to instruct the conferees of H.R. 3010; "yea" on H. Res. 38 (Expressing support for the accession of Israel to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development); "yea" on H. Res. 302 (Recognizing and commending the continuing dedication and commitment of employers of the members of the National Guard and the other reserve components who have been mobilized during the Global War on Terrorism and in defense of the United States); and "yea" on H.R. 3770 (Grant W. Green Post Office Building Designation Act).

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, personal reasons require my absence from legislative business scheduled for today, Tuesday, November 8, 2005. Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on tabling the motion to instruct offered by Representative DAVID OBEY on H.R. 3010, (Roll Call No. 573); "yea" on H. Res. 38, a resolution expressing support on Israel's accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Roll Call No. 574); "yea" on H. Res. 302, recognizing and commending employers of the members of the National Guard and other reserve components (Roll Call No. 575); and "yea" on H.R. 3770, the Grant W. Green Post Office Building Designation Act (Roll Call No. 576).

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, though I was absent on Tuesday, November 8, 2005 for medical reasons, I wish to have my intended votes recorded in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for the following votes:

Rollcall vote 573 on the Motion to Table the Appeal of the Ruling of the Chair on Motion to Instruct Conferees on H.R. 3010—"yea"; rollcall vote 574 on H. Res. 38—"yea," Rollcall vote 575 on H. Res. 302—"yea," Rollcall vote 576 on H.R. 3770—"yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from early afternoon votes in the U.S. House of Representatives on Nov. 8, 2005 due to an important meeting I had with the New Zealand Ambassador in St. Paul, Minnesota. During this meeting, the Ambassador and I discussed agricultural trade issues.

Had I been present in the U.S. House of Representatives, I would have voted "aye" on the following bills:

Motion to Table the Appeal of the Ruling of the Chair on Motion to Instruct Conferees; H. Res. 38; H. Res. 302; H.R. 3770.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, postponed votes on motions to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1953 and S. 1894 will be taken at a later time.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 3010, DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees: Messrs. REGULA, ISTOOK, WICKER, Mrs. NORTHUP, Mr. CUNNINGHAM, Ms. GRANGER, Messrs. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, SHERWOOD, WELDON of Florida, WALSH, LEWIS of California, OBEY, HOYER, Mrs. LOWEY, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, and Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD.

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 2048

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 2048.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

SEVERE RESTRICTIONS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND ILL-ADVISED

(Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, a couple weeks ago the majority in the House narrowly imposed on the bill creating an affordable housing fund with funds from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac severe restrictions to keep insidious left-wing organizations from undermining the stability of this country. I have a letter here from one of the organizations that was so targeted. It

is that radical group known as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a set of groups in local communities that, to quote them, ''pray at each meeting that families and those who have no home quickly may find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life.''

Here is what this subversive organization of deeply religious people dedicated to trying to help the poor have to say:

''Our members live in communities across the country. They serve individuals and families with no homes, families on the verge of homelessness. We see what they are going through. Many Councils of the Society provide shelter and housing for the poor. The poor need a voice just as much as Americans who have the financial ability to own their own homes. They, too, should be allowed the privilege to register to vote, regardless of where they live; and nonprofits should not be penalized for providing them an opportunity to do so.''

COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES,
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL,
St. Louis, MO, November 2, 2005.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC.

DEAR REP. FRANK: As National President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul representing 116,000 members across the United States in 4,000 parishes, I urge you to:

1. Support the Affordable Housing Fund in the GSE legislation (H.R. 1461), but without restricting an organization's right to engage in voter registration.

2. Oppose any language that restricts voter registration and freedom of affiliation by non-profit and public organizations when using their own funds.

3. Tell House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Financial Service Chairman Mike Oxley (R-OH) to reject these restrictions and bring the bill to the floor for a vote without this language.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul pray at each meeting ''that families and those who have no home may quickly find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life.'' I ask that you help us to continue to make this a reality.

It is our belief that it is the right of every American to vote. Access to the privilege to register to vote should not be conditioned upon where people live or what their financial condition is. Nonprofit organizations such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, work tirelessly to serve the poor. It is irresponsible to hold organizations hostage by this restrictive measure that impinges on the rights of poor Americans and upon those who seek to help give a face and a voice to the many that are voiceless. We see from the recent tragedies in the south that there are many poor and today many more homeless who need shelter. Adding such limitations on those who are trying so hard to help is wrong.

The Society has been serving the poor in America for over 150 years. Our members live in communities across the country. They regularly visit and serve individuals and families with no homes, families on the verge of homelessness, and families who live in hazardous and substandard conditions. We see what they are going through. Many Councils of the Society provide shelter and housing for the poor. The poor need a voice just as much as Americans who have the financial ability to afford their own homes. They, too, should be allowed the privilege to register to vote regardless of where they live, and nonprofits should not be penalized for providing them an opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH FLANNIGAN,
National President,
Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

□ 1330

ASSURED FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, this is the week upon which the Nation will solemnly recognize the holiday known as Veterans Day, a day out of the year when we should pause to recognize the sacrifice of those 25 million who have served our Nation and the 2.2 million people serving today in uniform, many on the front lines in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in other hot spots around the world.

This is not the only day in which we should recognize the sacrifice that those who have served in the past have given or the current sacrifice of the veterans and the active-duty military and their families, but we should do that every day. And the way Congress could do that best would be to assure veterans that the United States Government will keep its promises, promises that were made to them and their families at the time of enlistment.

Unfortunately, we have fallen short. Until this year the administration had consistently underfunded veterans' benefits, and in fact, even earlier this year the President's proposed budget would have claimed a substantial increase in health care funding for veterans, but actually would have done that by taxing veterans with a $250 enrollment fee for 2.2 million veterans and doubling the prescription drug copayment. It was not too many years ago that we had no required copayment for veterans. We should return to that time for vets in need.

These are quotes from the Veterans of Foreign Wars; since we do not want this to be a partisan issue, let us quote from a nonpartisan group about the President's budget:

''This budget will cause veterans health care to be delayed and may result in the return of 6-month-long waiting periods. That is especially shameful during a time of war.'' This is from the VFW, February 7, 2005.

''The message that this budget communicates is that part of the Federal Government deficit will be balanced on the back of military veterans,'' he said, ''because it's clear that the proper funding of veterans health care and other programs is not an administration policy.'' Again, a quote from the VFW.

The American Legion, same day: '' 'This is not acceptable,' said Thomas P. Cadmus, national commander. ''It's nothing more than a health care tax designed to increase revenue at the expense of veterans who served their country.'' He went on to say that during his visits to VA hospitals, he had not run into Bill Gates, Donald Trump, or Ross Perot seeking care. He sees mostly veterans, many on small fixed incomes, trying to make ends meet and exercising their very best health care option, Cadmus observed.

''No active-duty servicemember in harm's way should ever have to question the Nation's commitment to veterans. This is the wrong message at the wrong time to the wrong constituent.'' Again, the commander of the American Legion.

Why is the Republican-led Congress not listening to that? This week they are going to struggle mightily to cut programs important to middle-income families, student loans and other programs. Then, in the near future, they are going to struggle mightily to pass $70 billion of new tax cuts for people who earn over $300,000 a year. But are they going to struggle or are they even going to allow a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives on H.R. 515, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act?

There is no better way that the elected Representatives could celebrate Veterans Day here in the United States than by bringing up and passing this legislation that would, for all future budgets, assure that there would be adequate funding for veterans. They are already threatening a 2 percent across-the-board cut on that side of the aisle after they do the tax cuts for the rich people, because then we will be having to increase the size of the deficit despite the cuts to middle- and low-income programs, and that, of course, would hit hard again on veterans' programs.

We need assurances that that is not going to happen again. We need to properly recognize their service. The pay raises for Members of Congress, those are going forward in the House, although I oppose them. But somehow we cannot get the additional funding and the assured funding we need for our Nation's veterans.

Please, to the leadership, my Republican colleagues, and those on my side of the aisle, let us not just go home and march in the parades and tell people we are with the veterans. Let us demonstrate that with a vote of support on assured funding, mandatory funding, for every future budget year so that we will not go through these future struggles.

I have had too many calls from too many veterans to my district office where we have tried to help them get

in for critically needed care because of the extraordinary waiting lists in my part of the country, and I know that is not unique. We have got to do away with those waiting lists and deliver on the promises we have made.

Happy Veterans Day.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NICS AND HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, every week I stand here and I talk about common-sense approaches to reducing gun violence in this country, and yet this body sees fit to chip away at existing laws. So tonight I want to talk about the effects of gun violence in terms that everybody in this body understands, dollars and cents.

Throughout America our States are experiencing extraordinary budget problems, forcing them to cut spending on many important initiatives. A great deal of these budget woes are caused by skyrocketing health care costs, and the proposed cuts for Medicaid are not going to help the situation.

Among the initiatives being neglected because of State budget crunches is the National Instant Criminal Background Check. NICS is the database used to determine whether an individual is legally allowed to purchase a gun or not. Since its inception in 1994, NICS has been a great success. More than 700,000 individuals have been denied a gun for failing a background check.

However, the NICS system is only as good as the information that is in it, and because of tight budgets, updating the NICS database has fallen off the radar for many States. But as Congress continues to weaken our gun laws, we increasingly rely on the National Instant Background Check System to assure our constituents that guns do not fall into the wrong hands. But, unfortunately, the NICS database has become dangerously incomplete.

For example, half of all States have entered less than 60 percent of their convicted felons into the NICS system. Thirteen States have failed to enter the subjects of restraining orders stemming from domestic violence into the NICS system. And, of course, in all 50 States, people who are listed on the terrorist watch list cannot get on a plane, but they can buy a gun. This defies common sense.

I have introduced H.R. 1415, legislation that will require States to enter in all NICS information as quickly as possible. My bill would also provide grants to States that do not have the resources needed to update their databases. These grants will not only keep guns out of the hands of felons, but will reduce the States' out-of-control health care costs as well.

Of course, Congress will not allow funding for the Centers for Disease Control to study the economic impact of gun violence, so we have to use data from independent sources. Independent sources have shown gun violence costs our economy over $100 billion a year, $100 billion a year. In fact, each gun death costs our economy $2.8 million. And much of the cost is picked up by the State and local governments.

Gun violence increases law enforcement spending. Gun violence costs the economy lost productivity. And while Congress will not let us learn the exact amount, gun violence costs our health care system billions each and every year. And since gun violence plagues so many low-income communities, victims are often uninsured. And who picks up the tab for uninsured victims of gun violence? American taxpayers. That is who.

Passage of H.R. 1415 would serve as preventive medicine for the public health care system in many States. This legislation would prevent gun violence without infringing on anyone's second amendment rights. Nobody in this body believes convicted felons should be able to own guns. In fact, H.R. 1415 passed the House by a voice vote in the 107th Congress. Unfortunately, the other body did not have time to pick the bill up. But the bill had the support of several Senators who are known for their strong support of gun rights.

We have an opportunity to reduce health care costs and save lives by improving the NICS system. Mr. Speaker, let us pass H.R. 1415, the NICS Enforcement and Improvement Act, before the end of the year. Let us give the States the help that they need.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE REPUBLICANS' BUDGET CHOICES

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Indiana?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, more than 10 years have passed since the Republican Party issued its ''Contract With America.''

This week Congress will vote on budget cuts and sacrifices that only middle-class America is asked to bear. These budget cuts have less to do with deficit reduction than they have to do with making the richest among us more comfortable in the face of bad economic times, massive health care costs and unfunded mandates passed on to State and local governments.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, middle America is waking up to the bad news that Democrats have long known, and that is that the budget choices put forth by Republicans show that Republicans have a ''Contract on America.''

In the release of The Status of Working Families in Indiana, Indiana has had a dramatic increase in the number of persons in poverty during the past few years and has seen household incomes decline for the sixth year in a row. Job growth has been slow and wages have continued to be stagnant. The poverty rate for children in Indiana has jumped sharply in the past 3 years from 10.5 percent in 2002 to 18.5 percent in 2004. Indiana's childhood poverty rate is now greater than the Nation's, which is 17.8 percent.

Employment: From May, 2000, to January, 2002, Indiana lost 122,000 jobs due to the national economic slowdown and recession. Since September, 2003, Indiana has been on the road to recovery, but as of July, 2005, it was still 46,000 jobs below the level reached 5 years ago.

Wages: Indiana's wages have been stagnant for the past several years and have not kept pace with the average wages in the United States. By 2004, the average annual wage in Indiana had fallen to just over 88 percent of the U.S.

Incomes: Based on 2-year averages, Indiana's median household income has declined steadily since 1998 and 1999, when it was $46,136. By 2003 to 2004, it had fallen to $42,946.

In our rush to cut the budget on the backs of the poorest of Americans, we need, Mr. Speaker, to counteract that abusive act against middle-class and poor people and restore some economic sanity to the Nation's budget, to the United States of America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IRAQ AND TORTURE

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, Yogi Berra once told us that ''When you arrive at a fork in the road, you should take it.'' Well, the United States has reached a fork in the road when it comes to torturing other human beings, and it is time we took it, once and for all.

□ 1345

Senator JOHN MCCAIN has offered an amendment to the Defense appropriations bill clarifying that the United States Government, including the military and the CIA, does not condone the use of torture, putting the United States in a position to set an example for the rest of the world by clearly affirming our opposition to the use of torture as a military tactic.

Yet if the Bush administration has its way, Congress will reject this amendment, reserving its right to employ the use of torture in certain situations. That is right: The Bush administration has come out against an amendment that states for the record that the United States opposes the use of torture. Do they really want people to think we support torture?

For one thing, America's use of torture certainly has not helped us win any friends so far. It did not win us friends when it was revealed that the American military had abused prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. It did not win us any friends when thousands of photographs were released showing U.S. servicemembers torturing, beating, humiliating, and generally violating Iraqi prisoners of war. And it certainly did not win us any friends last week when it was revealed that the United States might possess dozens of top-secret military prisons in Eastern Europe for the sole purpose of viciously interrogating enemy prisoners. Never mind the fact that torture as a tactic does not provide accurate results. Individuals who are placed in unbearable situations will say just about anything to end the pain that they are suffering. Yet, even if torture produced positive results, it violates every single principle that our country stands for.

I am not the only one that understands this. Most Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle are opposed to torture. This weekend, Senator CHUCK HAGEL, who is no stranger to conservative politics, did not pull any punches when he said, ''I think the administration is making a terrible mistake in opposing JOHN MCCAIN's amendment on detainees and torture.'' He said, ''making a terrible mistake.''

Yet, the President responds with the same tired talking points. Yesterday, he tried to justify his opposition to the McCain amendment by saying, our President, ''We will aggressively pursue the enemy, but we will do so under the law.'' Then he went on to say, ''We do not torture.''

Mr. Speaker, does the President think he can paper over this problem and expect it to go away? If the President is so adamant that the United States does not torture, why does he continue to oppose the McCain amendment banning the use of torture? Unfortunately, this is just business as usual for an administration that has time and again taken the wrong path when arriving at a fork in the road.

Let us not forget that there were plenty of other options for the United States before the President made the decision to go to war in Iraq, a war that has subsequently cost the lives of nearly 2,100 American soldiers, uncounted tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians, and caused grave injuries to another 15,000 American soldiers.

Now, the President and his administration have yet another choice. They ought to take the high road when it comes to permanently ending the use of torture, and they ought to take the high road in bringing our troops home from Iraq and returning Iraq to the Iraqi people.

The Bush administration can never take back the many mistakes that have been made over the past several years: A failed war in Iraq, heinous acts of torture around the world, and a shamefully cynical foreign policy that has put Americans at greater risk than ever before.

But we are at another crossroads, and it is not too late to take the right path. If we do not, we risk suffering another Yogi Berra prophecy: ''Déjá vu all over again.''

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REPUBLICANS HAVE A PLAN

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have 5 minutes in place of the gentleman from North Carolina.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I did not plan to use these 5 minutes; but as we hear Bush-bashing and bashing of the Republicans as you walk through the Halls of our Chambers here, I think it is appropriate that we do take a minute to respond.

We just heard more Bush-bashing about accusations of torture in Iraq. I wonder where some of these same people were when Abu Ghraib prison had the torture of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians and other people in that society who had their limbs lopped off, who were taken to the precipice outside of the prison and lined up, to deal with prison-crowding. A former Iraqi prisoner told some of us Members of Congress they would line up the prisoners and then shoot them in front of a ditch and then bury them. One escaped who had been shot several times and he told us that story.

The Bush administration has wanted to stop the torture of people in that prison and the loss of life in that country. They do not want to talk about the 300,000 mass graves that we have uncovered in that country, the slaughter of his own people that Saddam Hussein conducted.

Then we heard the previous speaker talk about how bad things are in America under the Bush administration and Bush policy. They did not tell us that under the policy of President Bush we have actually, in just this last fiscal year that ended the end of September, we have $100 billion in additional revenue into the United States Treasury. That is a plan of failure? In one year we have reduced the deficit, the projected deficit a year ago by some 25 percent, a sizable feat; we had unemployment before Katrina go to 4.9 percent, one of the lowest percentages on record, and even in the last quarter, with the incredible natural disaster that we faced in the gulf coast and in Florida, we had a remarkable 3.8 percent economic growth. They do not want to talk about the jobs that have been created under this policy.

So we do have a plan. We have a plan this week or soon to reduce some spending. We have balanced the budget before; we can do it again. We can bring about the reforms, and some of those are tough reforms, but we have a plan. It involves reform, and it will result in savings and we will see continued growth, economic growth in this country, and fulfill the dreams of Americans who want better jobs, who want lower taxes, less government regulation, and less litigation. All of those things, higher taxes, more government regulation, and litigation, we know drive jobs and opportunity out of this great Nation.

So Republicans have a plan. We will make reforms. They will result in savings and better opportunities for all Americans as opposed to the rhetoric that we have had here on the floor this afternoon. So I am pleased to present those items to the House in response to the rhetoric we have heard.

ONE NATION—TWO PRESIDENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, across the country today, Americans are going to the polls to vote for candidates and issues. A year ago, the Americans went to the polls and voted for a President, but they got two instead. We have George W. Bush, the President of domestic policy, like appointing a self-described fashion God who left the gulf coast unprotected; and we have DICK CHENEY, the President of foreign policy, including secret CIA presence around the world.

Now, today the President of foreign policy is trying to round up votes in the Senate to exempt the CIA from an amendment that would ban the torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners. It is a sure sign that America has lost its way when we even have to talk about banning torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners.

America has never had two Presidents until now, and America has never had a question about its moral integrity, until now. The President of foreign policy would have us believe that we must become the enemy to defeat the enemy. Like so much from this administration, this is not true. America's moral imperative is true enough, strong enough, and safe enough to keep this Nation a shining light of freedom without secret, black ops demanded by someone who was never elected President.

Throughout our history, Presidents have led this Nation through wars at home and abroad by remaining true to America's principles and values. In the mid-19th century, America had never before faced a more ferocious enemy than the one from within that reduced us to the Civil War. President Lincoln never lost sight of what we were fighting for. He said: ''Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as a heritage of all men in all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit, and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors.''

In the early 20th century, America had never before faced a ferocious foe like the one that plunged the whole world into war, but President Woodrow Wilson did not forget what America stood for. He said: ''The present and all that it holds belongs to the nations and the peoples who preserve their self-control and the orderly processes of governments; the future to those who prove themselves the true friends of mankind.''

In the mid-20th century, America had never before faced an enemy more like one that had plunged us again into a world war, but Franklin Delano Roosevelt never wavered in his defense of his country: ''The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.''

And with the world on the brink of nuclear terror during the Cuban Missile Crisis, John Kennedy kept America free and safe without subverting American values. JFK knew a lot about winning a war without losing the peace. He said: ''When at least at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each one of us, our success or failure in whatever office we may hold will be measured by the answers to four questions: Were we truly men,'' and I would add women, ''of courage, men and women of judgment, men and women of integrity? Were we truly men and women of dedication?''

Presidents Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt, and Kennedy knew a thing about freedom and liberty; and they knew a lot about America. We are the land of the free and not the home of the afraid. But the President of foreign policy would have it otherwise. His demands for black ops is a black eye on this Nation. American history, not the unelected President of foreign policy, should be our guide.

Great American Presidents have led this Nation in times no less frightening than today. Ask any veteran of the Second World War what was at stake. They called it a world war for a reason. They did not shrink from their duty, and we must not forget that we did our best and we are the best hope of this world. We keep America free without losing America's moral integrity.

The unelected President of foreign policy wants an exemption on an amendment that would ban torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners. He wants the CIA to be free to do whatever they want.

We have come a long way from the days of great Presidents to arrive at the day of an unelected President. He acts not in the shadow of the White House, but standing in front of the person elected President. We used to shine light into the darkness of regimes where people disappeared into secret prisons, gulags. Now, the unelected President of foreign policy would have us become the custodians of gulags.

For a long time, people have wondered just how President Bush could get it so wrong so often. Now we know: he has help. America has a second President we never elected.

Mr. Speaker, I will include for the RECORD an article from the Village Voice.

PRESIDENT SHOULD DUMP CHENEY

(By James Ridgeway)

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Politicians across the political spectrum are hoping against hope that President Bush can take control of the nation and jumpstart a second term, kicking out chief adviser Karl Rove—who remains at risk in the Plame Affair—and changing policy in Iraq, where U.S. soldiers continue to die. But as everyone in Washington knows, Rove isn't the real problem here. The real problem for Bush is Vice President Dick Cheney—it's Cheney's now former chief of staff, Scooter Libby, who has been indicted in the Plame Affair, and it's his pushing that has the administration taking a hard line on the handling of detainees. And the best way, perhaps the only way, for Bush to take charge of the country is to dump the vice president, forcing him into retirement before he can be charged by Plame Affair prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald with violating the espionage laws.

These last few days, while Bush wandered around South America from one fruitless meeting to another and fended off charges of prisoner abuse in Iraq with bland statements such as ''We do not torture,'' Cheney was busily working away behind the scenes seeking to persuade Congress not to impose restrictions on the CIA torture interrogators. The Washington Post revealed last week the CIA was running interrogations in secret jails for suspected terrorists in eastern Europe.

Cheney, even more than Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, is the man behind the Iraq war. Fitzgerald's indictment of Libby bluntly states that Cheney's top aide learned Valerie Plame, the covert CIA agent, was administration critic Joe Wilson's wife from Cheney. Given that, how can Cheney avoid testifying in a Libby trial? He does not have the immunity of a president.

''Libby is the firewall protecting Vice President Cheney,'' writes John Dean in his FindLaw column:

The Libby indictment asserts that ''[o]n or about June 12, 2003 Libby was advised by the Vice President of the United States that Wilson's wife worked at the Central Intelligence Agency in the Counterproliferation Division. Libby understood that the Vice President had learned this information from the CIA.''

In short, Cheney provided the classified information to Libby—who then told the press. Anyone who works in national security matters knows that the Counterproliferation Division is part of the Directorate of Operations—the covert side of the CIA, where most everything and everyone are classified.

If Fitzgerald were successful in flipping Libby—and that seems pretty clearly to be his intention—then Cheney himself would face charges of violating the espionage act.

The outcome? Libby will probably hold fast through the 2006 election, his lawyers dragging out the case by interviewing reporters, etc, and then Libby, if convicted, can expect a pardon. As for Cheney, he could save face, resigning for health reasons—that suspect ticker of his coming to the rescue.

At that point, Bush could appoint a new vice president to serve out the remainder of his term. This appointment would require majority approval of both houses of Congress under the 25th Amendment.

Meanwhile, its business as usual, Bush drifting from day to day with the currents. Yesterday just as Bush uttered his denial of torture, the army charged five Rangers with abusing prisoners in Iraq. This morning, Italian state TV aired a documentary describing how the U.S. used white phosphorous bombs against civilians in Falluja. The U.S. admits using the weapons to illuminate battlefields. We are not signatories to a treaty banning the use of white phosphorous weapons. The film is being broadcast on the first anniversary of the U.S. attack on Falluja, which destroyed much of the city and displaced its population of 300,000.

Tomorrow, Ahmed Chalabi, a deputy prime minister of Iraq, the man who fed the gullible American press wrong information on Saddam's possession of weapons of mass destruction, is visiting Washington to address neocon headquarters at the American Enterprise Institute. Chalabi also is to meet with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. A thoroughly disgraced liar, the conduit of so much of the phony information that led us to war, a man with no political base outside the conniving neocon circles, Chalabi is now seriously discussed in Washington as a possible American-backed compromise candidate for Iraqi prime minister because he might appeal of the Shiite southern part of the country. As it stands, he is now in control of the

oil industry, and in the minds of U.S. policymakers, that counts for a lot.

□ 1400

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BASS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GINGREY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KIRK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HURRICANE WILMA AND RECONCILIATION

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a crisis in South Florida.

The third most destructive hurricane ever to hit this country struck my congressional district just over 2 weeks ago. Thousands of people are still without power, thousands still have holes in their roofs that threaten to condemn their houses with every new rain.

Thousands have mobility issues and are without housing because they cannot get up and down the stairs to their apartment. The list goes on and on, and it is truly heart wrenching.

Just last week I was delivering meals to seniors in my district who could not get out of their third floor condominiums. Even though it was 5 days after the hurricane struck South Florida, the residents there said that no one had heard from FEMA, no one had seen FEMA and, worse yet, no one knew how to get in touch with FEMA to make sure things did not get any worse.

And why do I fear that things could get worse? Because of problems like this. This is a third floor apartment, that is the ceiling of the apartment, and as we can see, you can look right through the ceiling at the sky.

This is the woman's master bedroom and literally during the storm, 1 minute after she walked out of that master bedroom the ceiling came down on her bed. The roof caved in. A minute earlier and it would have caved in on her.

Obviously, this apartment is uninhabitable. However, this is a three-story building. If we delay the disaster response, if we do not get FEMA tarp distribution centers set up right away, if we wait weeks before we deliver individual assistance, then not only are we saying to the woman that lived in this unit, tough it out, you are on our your own for now, but we are also making the problem worse because there are two floors below this apartment unit.

If it rains through this massive hole in the ceiling in this woman's apartment, then it will leak down onto the apartments on the second floor and possibly weaken the structure, leading to the evacuation of everyone in that part of building. And that is beginning to happen; this is what is happening. Our ineffective response is not only irresponsible, but it also costs the taxpayers more money than necessary.

Now, I have been talking about a natural disaster, which is Hurricane Wilma. But I also want to talk a minute about a man-made disaster that is coming, something that will victimize once again the victims of Hurricane Wilma, Katrina and Rita. I am talking about the Draconian budget cuts proposed by the Republican leadership in their so-called budget reconciliation package.

Last week, the papers in South Florida blared the news that over 5,000 people's homes had been condemned, much of it affordable housing. In Broward County the median price of a home is $348,000, making many homes and even rental apartments out of reach for thousands of south Floridians.

While the loss of 5,000 homes damaged by Hurricane Wilma is terrible, I would like to point out that the budget reconciliation package endorsed by the Republican leadership eliminates affordable housing vouchers for 3,500 people in Florida alone.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, while Hurricane Wilma made 5,000 Florida families homeless last week, the Republican leadership is proposing cuts that would make 3,500 more Florida families homeless. So first we get hit by Katrina, then we get hit by Wilma and either this week or next the American people will get hit by Hurricane Republican.

Hurricanes are natural disasters, Mr. Speaker. What we will be debating in the House this week or next is a man-made disaster, a man-made disaster that not only would leave 3,500 Florida families homeless through cuts to Section 8 housing vouchers, but also, incredibly, would cut $58.9 million in elementary and secondary education funds for Florida students, $4.9 million in cuts for supplemental nutrition programs for women infants and children, $25.1 million in cuts for children and families.

These are funds that provide for the Head Start program and help abused and neglected children. Cutting funds for abused and neglected children, what are we coming to here?

I urge my colleagues to vote against a man-made disaster that will originate from this body this week and sweep across the country, displacing thousands of people nationwide. I urge them to vote against the Republican budget reconciliation package.

DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the upcoming special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, as we speak, there is a bill in the wings called the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, its fate yet to be determined because it is not at all clear that there are enough votes in this body to pass it.

Basically, this bill is part of the budget resolution for 2006, and what it anticipates is a three-step process except that those steps are treated very separately and in isolation. The first step is what the bill I am talking about proposes, that is, reductions in mandatory spending, so-called ''entitlement spending,'' of about $54 billion.

The second step to follow is a reduction in taxes in the amount of $106 billion. That is what the budget resolution calls for. As a consequence, this bill does not achieve its stated name, which is the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Instead, by cutting taxes by more than they cut spending, it leads to a deficit that is $52 billion bigger than would otherwise be the case. That is the second step.

And then there is a third step in this bill that is not much talked about, but it is written into the bill, written into the budget resolution for 2006, and that is an increase in the debt ceiling of the United States by $781 billion. That is what happens when you have tax cuts that are not adequately matched by spending cuts. The deficit gets worse, and the bottom line is, $781 billion will have to be added to the debt ceiling of the United States, the legal limit to which we bill because of the fiscal policies we have followed for the last 5 years.

Now, some supporters claim that this bill, the so-called Deficit Reduction

Act of 2005, will go to help pay for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In truth, this bill has nothing to do with paying for Katrina. It has everything to do, as I said, with facilitating further tax cuts.

This bill is part of a larger budget resolution that calls, as I have said, for a total of $106 billion in additional tax cuts yet to come, but nevertheless called for in the budget resolution. $70 billion will come in reconciled tax cuts, which means they will be on a fast track. They will go through the Senate without threat of filibuster. $36 billion are in unreconciled tax cuts. The total is $106 billion.

As I have said, this is a three-step process. The original purpose of reconciliation was to rein in the deficit. But the reconciliation bill this year, the one that is waiting in the wings, the one we are addressing today, only raises the deficits for the reasons I have just mentioned.

Now, if we do not acknowledge this, but if you take the position that these cuts are somehow going to facilitate the appropriations we have passed and will pass to pay for Hurricane Katrina and Rita, one would have to say that if we are going to do that—and I think we should somehow, over time, have a plan for paying the enormous sums we are borrowing to reconstruct the gulf coast—if we are going to do that, we should spread the cost equitably over our whole population. And that is what we want to address today, more than anything, and that is how the costs are being spread, how the costs are being allocated. Whether you take the attitude that this goes to pay for Katrina or goes to offset tax cuts, who bears the brunt? Will it be those who are able to bear the brunt or those who are vulnerable and least able to bear the brunt?

Unfortunately, and this is a point we will make again and again and demonstrate the facts to prove our case, unfortunately, the brunt of this bill will come to rest on the shoulders of those who are least able to bear it.

In that respect, I now recognize the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. CASE) to discuss the implications of this bill.

Mr. CASE. I thank my colleague.

Watch out, watch out, America, because the majority's and the President's spin machine is in overdrive on this bill. Yes, the majority's budget reconciliation bill brazenly and erroneously entitled the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, what a laugh, is hitting the floor, or we think it is going to hit the floor.

We will hear in coming days what a brave and revolutionary bill this is. Wrong. This is a cowardly bill, a hurtful bill, and it continues the majority's policies which, in the course of 4 short years have wrecked a once strong budget.

We will hear that this bill is the only way to go. Wrong. This is the way to go if your goal is to help the few at the expense of the rest of us and without regard to basic fiscal responsibility.

We have heard that this bill will decrease the budget. Watch the numbers on this bill. This bill does not decrease the budget deficit. This bill worsens the deficit, worsens it substantially.

This bill is really about credibility. It is a matter of credibility, of who has the best overall plan to balance our Nation's books and restore fiscal stability. Is it the same people who over the last couple of years told us that ''deficits do not matter''? I do not think so. Is it the same people who are presiding over the most rapid increase in Federal spending in 40 years? I do not think so. Is it the same people who keep raiding the Social Security trust fund for non-Social Security purposes, and then turning around and saying it is okay, saying do not worry about it, but also introducing a bill to radically reduce benefits in order to make up for the stolen amounts? I do not think so.

Is it the same people who pretend that a 1-year deficit of over $300 billion, almost $500 billion if you are counting the Social Security trust fund monies that were raided to boost up the revenues, is it those people? I do not think so. Is it the same people that increased your debt, your total debt, from $6 trillion when I joined Congress just 3 years ago to $8 trillion today and now another almost $1 trillion in this bill itself? I do not think so.

We want to balance the budget. We know that this will take careful and painful balancing of revenues and expenses. But we do not trust the majority and the administration with this bill because we do not believe that you have shown you can be trusted with America's books, that you will not put all of your sacred cows on the table just as we are willing to put our sacred cows on the table.

When you are truly ready to put everything on the table with us, then I believe that we can have a constructive discussion. Until then, your bill is junk in, junk out. When you are ready to get real about what it is going to take to truly balance our books, let us know.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, more than slogans, sound bites and speeches, far more important for Members of Congress is what we do when it comes to expressing our values. What we do in this budget will say more about the values of Members of Congress than any speech given on the floor of the House this year.

It is interesting and it is sad that while last week we honored Rosa Parks as the first woman in American history to lie in state in the Rotunda of our Nation's Capitol, just a few days later, this House leadership will dishonor all that she stood for. How? By cutting child support, by cutting foster family programs, by cutting 40,000 students off of school lunch programs, by robbing $14.3 billion from student financial aid to give our hard-working, high-achieving youth a chance for better life through a college education, and by cutting health care programs for low-income families.

Rosa Parks did not just fight for a seat on the bus. She fought for fairness for every American, and to see that every child has a chance, a fair chance, to reach his or her highest God-given potential.

This legislation is an attack upon those high principles. The mean-spirited cuts in this bill will hurt decent, hard-working American families who are doing their best to help their children have a better life.

□ 1415

Why? Not to pay for Hurricane Katrina costs. The House leadership is doing this so that people making $1 million a year this year in dividend income can continue to receive every dime of their $220,000-a-year tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, if this is compassionate conservatism, where is the compassion? If this is a faith-based program, I would ask what major religion in the world preaches the values of taking the most from those who have the least and taking nothing from those who have the most?

This budget makes a mockery of the American values of fairness and shared sacrifice during time of war. Rosa Parks understood that actions speak far louder than words. The American people understand this. And I believe when the American people find that Republican leadership of this House wants to make college education less affordable for hard-working middle-income and lower-income children in this country; when Americans find out that they want to cut Medicaid health care services for pregnant women and take away school lunches from children who need a decent nutritional lunch in order to reach their highest God-given potential in school, I think they are going to be outraged.

This budget bill aptly, or should I say amazingly, named the Deficit Reduction Act, is actually going to raise the deficit as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) said by $52 billion.

Mr. Speaker, if there were a law against dishonesty in naming legislation before this House, anyone who votes for this bill would deserve a felony conviction. This bill is wrong for America. It does not reflect the values of the vast majority of good, decent, hard-working American citizens, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike. More than anything I have seen in my 14 years in Congress, I believe this budget bill shows that the House Republican leadership is truly out of touch with the American people.

Let us say ''yes'' to the future of this country. Let us say ''yes'' to lower deficit. Let us say ''yes'' to hard-working college students and to families who want to have a dream for a better life for their children by saying ''no'' to this unfair, unwise, ill-thought-out budget bill.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY).

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) for his leadership on this very important matter. When we talk about the cuts contained in this reconciliation bill, they sound like such large numbers. It is very hard to relate to. When we talk about cutting student loans $14 billion and Medicaid $11 billion, child support enforcement $4.9 billion, food stamps $844 million, it is very difficult to get your arms wrapped around those numbers because they seem so extraordinary that they become almost distant and nonnumbers.

But I can tell you for the people that I represent, and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has been to Nevada, he has been to my congressional district, he knows what I am dealing with there. In real human terms, when you cut that much out of Medicaid over 200,000 Nevadans, poor Nevadans that depend on Medicaid so that they can have their basic health care needs met, they are going to be plum out of luck. And there are 18,000 students that are going to be affected by cuts in the student loan program. What does that mean?

I went through school on student loans. I am the first person in my family to go to college. My dad was a waiter when I was growing up and money was pretty scarce in our home. There is no way my parents could have afforded to put me through college and law school. So what did I do? I depended on those student loans. So as a Member of Congress I am going to cut the opportunity for middle-class Americans to send their kids to school? That would be the worst possible thing to do. And over the next 5 years funding in Nevada that we receive for child support collection is going to be cut by $60 million. What does that mean? That means that we will have a whole lot of deadbeat dads in Nevada that are not going to have to live up to their responsibilities to pay child support because there will be no way to force them to do that. And that would be horrible for the families that these people, that these men are leaving.

When we talk about the school lunch program, there are going to be 40,000 children who are going to be impacted if we cut that school lunch program. Now, I am sorry to say, but there are a lot of people in my congressional district that the only meal that these kids get, the only decent, warm meal they get is the one that they get when they go to school with the school lunch program. These cuts would have devastating consequences on ordinary Americans, people that elect us to come here to protect and defend them and to give them a helping hand.

This is not a helping hand. This is a slap in the face to all Americans. And I know from my own constituents, it is going to have devastating consequences.

But there is something that I really want to talk to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) about because I am not sure that I understand, so maybe I am wrong. As you know I have got the fastest-growing senior population in the United States. We have been told, not threatened by the doctors, but we have been told by doctors because of the decline in Medicare payments for treating older Americans, senior citizens, that many of the doctors are not going to be able to treat Medicare patients. So that means that I have a whole lot of senior citizens, 65 years and above, that depend on Medicare so that they can go see their doctor.

Now, if I have got doctors and we have got doctors across this country telling us, telling us they can no longer afford to treat Medicare patients. So the other body acted responsibly and they put the requisite amount of money that they needed in order to help the doctors so that the doctors can continue treating older Americans, treating our senior citizens and helping with their health care needs. This body, the Republican leadership here does not include this in our budget reconciliation because they want to get to that $50 billion magic number for whatever reason and they are going to do that on the backs of the doctors and the senior citizens in this country.

But here is the rub: my husband is a doctor. He is a nephrologist. He treats a lot of older Americans. He just received an alert from the American Medical Association saying that we need this desperately. We need the Medicare reimbursement fund so we can continue treating our senior patients, but the Republican leadership in the House says that they are not going to put this in the reconciliation bill. But do not worry, doctors, we are going to go ahead and we will put it in Labor HHS.

If I am not mistaken, we already passed Labor HHS and there is no reimbursement for our doctors for care for senior citizens. So I do not understand where they think this money is going to be magically coming from.

The reality is it is going to cost $10.8 billion in order to get the doctors to where they need to be to treat senior citizens. We are doing the smoke-and-mirror thing. If we are doing a budget reconciliation thing here but we are still winking at the doctors and saying, oh, do not worry, docs, we will take care of you down the road, how are we going to do that? Where are we going to find the money? Does it not come from the same pot? $10 billion is $10 billion, whether it is in budget reconciliation, which would be the more honest place to put it, or whether it is down the road in a piece of legislation that we have already passed.

This is not at all fiscal responsibility. I have heard Republican after Republican come down here and talk about how they will put money in Americans' pockets and they need to cut the Federal Government's budget. That is nonsense. They are not doing that at all. What they are doing is deferring it. They would like to have this $50 billion pot of money so they can go back during the election and brag that they are actually saving taxpayers money.

They are not saving taxpayers. They are hurting taxpayers. They are hurting the people that we represent, and this is not fiscal responsibility. This is fantasy.

Am I wrong in this? Do I have my facts wrong?

Mr. SPRATT. The gentlewoman is not only right. She is forcefully correct. She is absolutely right, no question about it.

Ms. BERKLEY. So what should we do about this? Is this not a bit dishonest for the Republican leadership?

Mr. SPRATT. That is what we are doing now is alerting everyone to the contents of this reconciliation bill which is hanging in the wings, pretending under the name of ''deficit reduction'' to be about fiscal responsibility when it is anything but that.

Ms. BERKLEY. Well, I find it absolutely fascinating, and I know being married to a doctor that doctors are about the worst politicians in the world. They do not understand this political process. But they have gravitated over to the Republican side of the aisle when they were talking about tort reform, although it is my opinion as a doctor's wife, the other side never had any intentions of passing meaningful tort reform for the doctors. They just kept them hanging on a string.

This, which is the AMA's number one priority, to make sure that the doctors are getting appropriately reimbursed for treating Medicare patients, senior patients, this is so much worse for the doctors. And they are still playing games with the doctors, playing games with the seniors, playing games with the American public by saying wink, wink, we will take care of you later.

Let us take care of the docs and the senior citizens now when we should, in front of full view, in the daytime, in the light of day; and let us stop this nonsense of trying to sneak money in through the back door. It is disgusting and shameful.

Mr. SPRATT. I thank the gentlewoman for her comments. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me. I appreciate the opportunity to speak out on this poorly named reconciliation bill which will expand the Federal deficit and does enormous damage to people in this country. When 8.2 million children in America do not have health insurance, cutting Medicaid is wrong. When millions of children in America are abused and neglected, cutting child protection is wrong. When millions of children do not have access to early childhood programs, cutting child care is wrong.

Let us go back over these areas. Medicaid, the House bill would allow States to charge low-income working families substantial new premiums and co-payments in order for their children to participate in the Medicaid program, access health care services, or obtain prescription drugs. While the House bill would permit States to impose costly new fees on nearly all Medicaid beneficiaries, those most likely to face significantly higher premiums and copayments are the 6 million children who receive their health care through the Medicaid program and whose families have income just above the poverty line or above 133 percent of the poverty line for children under six. Most families with incomes just above the poverty line are working families struggling to get by.

Let us turn to child support and faster care. CBO projects that the cuts in Federal Child Support Enforcement funding will mean that an additional $24 billion in child support will go uncollected. In this Congress we have been so proud in the past that we have finally been able to create a system in this country so that deadbeat dads will be forced to pay the child support that the courts have ordered them to pay. Now, in this Republican budget, they have decided that they are going to reduce dramatically the support for child support funding.

In addition, the House budget reconciliation bill would reduce Federal supports for children in foster care and for grandparents and other relatives who are taking care of these children. This cut comes at a time when the overall child welfare system is struggling to address the needs of over 800,000 children in need.

When you look at this package, it is beyond belief. Their food stamp cuts, reductions in food stamps, that will mean 225,000 individuals, according to the Congressional Budget Office, most of whom live in low-income working families, will be cut off the food stamp program. Basically, when you take this whole package together, you have a reconciliation bill described as a deficit reduction bill which increases the deficit. But what we are really talking about here is sacrifice.

We have been saying for years that if you do trillions of dollars of tax cuts mostly for the wealthiest people in this country, when you spend a billion and a half dollars a week in Iraq, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are simply borrowed money, finally, the Republicans say we have to sacrifice. And the people at the head of the line to sacrifice are our children, the disabled, people from low-income families, that is who the Republicans want to sacrifice to pay for the tax cuts to pay for Iraq and to pay for Katrina.

□ 1430

There is no more immoral set of priorities in this country than what we see in this bill today and what we see in the Republican agenda in the House.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I now yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) leading this discussion of what is wrong with the Republican reconciliation bill, and I agree there is devastating harm from the cuts to Medicaid, student loans, and food stamps. Cutting these programs that assist low-income and middle-income families to help pay for the tax cuts for the very wealthiest is simply unconscionable. These are all good reasons to vote ''no'' for this bill.

I want to talk about something else that is contained in this bill that has not gotten as much attention. That is the Republican proposal to allow new offshore oil drilling around large parts of the country, the so-called OCS provisions that have come out of the Resources Committee.

I want to direct my remarks to my Republican colleagues from coastal States. I do so because coastal-State Republicans will either stop this provision or allow it to become law.

Let us be frank. Democrats are not going to vote for this bill, and that means that coastal Republicans will decide whether or not we have new drilling off our coasts. These are Republicans in Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and New Hampshire on the East Coast. On the West Coast, Republicans from California, Oregon and Washington all need to stand up for their coastal communities.

All we need are 15 or 20 of them to tell their leadership that they are going to vote ''no'' on the bill unless the oil drilling provisions are removed. These provisions are not included in this Senate bill, and if they are taken out of the House bill, then we will not see them in the final conference report. It is really that simple.

I know that some Members are tempted to buy the argument made by proponents of lifting this ban. Governor Jeb Bush and others are saying that this gives States control over their coasts and that new drilling everywhere is inevitable, but those arguments just do not hold water. Here is the straight story.

Among its many provisions, the bill ends the annual congressional moratorium immediately, including the one we just passed and was so recently signed into law.

Section 6515 of the bill states: ''All provisions of existing Federal law prohibiting the spending of appropriated funds to conduct oil and natural gas leasing and preleasing activity for any area of the OCS shall have no force or effect.''

This provision permanently removes Congress from any future decisions about offshore oil drilling. Theoretically, the bill leaves the Presidential moratorium in place until 2012, but this President or whoever follows him could end that whenever he or she wants.

Section 6509 of the bill specifically gives the President the authority to partially or completely revoke the existing Presidential moratorium before 2012. I am not a betting person, but I would wager that if Congress ends this moratorium, President Bush would quickly follow suit. That would mean the immediate end to the ban now in place on new offshore drilling off Florida, New Jersey, and all the other coastal States.

In addition, after expiration or revocation of the Presidential moratorium, States lose all control over drilling conducted beyond 125 miles offshore. That is 75 miles closer than current law. To be fair, it does allow the States that support drilling to have some control, but this at the expense of their neighbor. For example, the bill completely rewrites the Coastal Zone Management Act's Federal consistency review authority.

Section 6503 of the bill replaces the definition of ''affected State'' under the OCS Lands Act with a new, weaker definition for adjacent States. That means if Virginia wants new oil drilling off its coast, North Carolina, Maryland or Delaware would have no say in the matter, even though drilling off Virginia would clearly affect those States. The same holds true if Alabama or Georgia wants to drill and Florida does not.

Supporters of the bill say that the bill helps States that oppose new drilling as well, but that is just wrong. If President Bush repeals the moratorium, a State can supposedly petition to extend the moratorium off its shores for 5 years, but that requires repeated action and complex steps. Even if a State makes the request, the Federal Government could simply say ''no'' and drilling would begin off Florida or New Jersey or any other of these States.

Under the current administration, I do not think it is hard to imagine that that would happen.

Even if the Feds grant the extension, the protection would only be temporary for 5 years, with one-time renewal. After that, no more moratorium on new drilling anywhere.

Under this bill, we would literally see the push for new drilling on the entire United States coastline almost immediately upon enactment.

So this is what we are left with if Republicans allow this bill to become law: No congressional moratorium on new drilling; a Presidential moratorium that can and would likely be withdrawn immediately; no limits on drilling in neighboring States that might want to drill; and a cumbersome process for States that do not want new drilling and one that could simply be ignored by the Federal Government. It does not sound like protection for coastal States to me.

Coastal State Republicans can stop this. I urge them to stand up for their

communities and tell their leadership to take these OCS provisions out; and if the new drilling provisions are included in the bill, I urge them, along with us, to vote ''no.''

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her statement, and I now yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY).

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn this fiscally irresponsible and morally offensive budget proposal which violates every principle of responsible government.

This budget reconciliation bill, as presented by the majority leadership, is a pathetic attempt to disguise their real intentions to pass another bloated windfall for the wealthiest Americans at the expense of millions who are already suffering great hardships.

It is shameful that the same leaders who spend much of their time talking about morality and family values would attempt to finance another tax cut for millionaires by cutting food stamps for the hungry and slashing $12 billion from Medicaid.

At the State level, hundreds of thousands of hard-working Americans are already losing their Medicaid benefits. In Missouri alone, in my State, the Republican legislature and governor have managed to knock 90,000 Medicaid recipients off of the rolls and another 30,000-something children off of CHIPs. We are pushing these people into the army of the uninsured, which now numbers more than 45 million in this country.

On top of this travesty, the majority leadership is trying to reward big oil and big gas companies with a get-into-ANWR-free card as part of the budget reconciliation. These same companies made $27 billion in profits during the last 90 days, and they still want more?

I appeal to my Republican colleagues to rediscover their humanity and to return to fiscal sanity. The courageous communities along the gulf coast who survived the hurricanes and people of goodwill across this country are counting on Congress to do the right thing. The very last thing we should do is to punch more holes in a safety net that is already badly damaged.

Mr. Speaker, poverty and food insecurity in the United States are on the rise and Hurricane Katrina just made things worse. The number of Americans in poverty is rising steadily, from 32 million in 2000 to 37 million in 2004. More than one in six U.S. children lives in poverty. Food insecurity in the United States increased in 2004 for the fifth straight year, affecting 38.2 million people or 11.9 percent of our households. Children fared even worse; 19 percent of them were food insecure in 2004, meaning their families did not have enough money to provide sufficient food.

The combination of stagnant wages and sharply rising costs for essentials such as health care and energy has forced more struggling families to skimp on food in order to pay their bills. This year, Hurricane Katrina left hundreds of thousands of families with no homes and no jobs. This reconciliation bill cuts $7 billion from programs serving working families and vulnerable individuals. Over 5 years, the House bill cuts child support by $4.9 billion; cuts food stamps by $844 million; cuts foster care assistance by $577 million; and cuts Supplemental Security Income to the elderly and disabled by $732 million.

These cuts are likely to generate more poverty and economic insecurity among families and individuals struggling to get by. We must defeat this resolution and then renew our bipartisan commitment to restoring balance, fairness and common sense to the budget process.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his statement, and I now yield to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to strenuously object to tucking the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Act reauthorization into this budget reconciliation bill.

What this does is masquerade the Draconian policy changes of TANF that impinge on what we claim to be our priority, to help working families, particularly women, get back into the workforce. How can we do that, create productive workers in view of slashing the work supports so desperately needed by these marginal families?

How can we cut $11 billion from the Medicaid program and say we want these women to go to work? How can we cut $4.9 billion from child support enforcement and say that we want you to go to work? How can we not even provide an inflationary increase in child care funding, while we increase those work requirements and say with a straight face that we are trying to help people reach self-sufficiency? How can we claim to try to raise women up and families up from their conditions, when we slash educational opportunity, reduce educational opportunity into oblivion?

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are people who are prepared to tell me that we are increasing TANF benefits by almost $1 billion, but when you look at what we are doing, the $926 million over 5 years, scored by CBO, because they must include extensions of supplemental grants, which they are excluded by law from not projecting, if you look at that, and adjusting for this scoring factor, what we are actually seeing is a TANF spending reduction of $239 million. Yes, I said it, $239 million reduction in TANF services.

This basic block grant is frozen. It increases work requirements, but it does do one thing that I approve of. It eliminates two performance bonus programs, saving us $1.1 billion, but it plows that money, $349 million, back into marriage promotion programs.

Do we have any concern about the kind of domestic violence that this may spawn, or another $409 million for, quote, unquote, ''new research projects,'' researching and studying the poor, rather than providing the poor with the needed services like Medicaid, like child care, like educational opportunity? Instead, we are continuing to make this a windfall for what we call poverty entrepreneurs.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her statement, and I yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

□ 1445

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me and for his hard work and energy, his effort and commitment to the people of this Nation.

I consider it a privilege to serve on the House Budget Committee, helping to lay out a fiscal blueprint for the Nation to work toward crafting a document that reflects the values and the priorities of the American people.

Budgets are just not numbers on a page, Mr. Speaker. They live and they breathe. They are about human beings and what is happening in their lives. As this House prepares to consider $54.2 billion in a budget package, I find it hard to believe that the American people's priorities would include denying food stamps to 300,000 Americans and 40,000 children. I find it hard to believe their values tell them that we should respond to the skyrocketing health care costs by charging children from poor families for doctors' visits; that their answer to unaffordable child care costs would be denying child care assistance to another 270,000 children of working parents, cutting food stamps, charging poor families for visits to the pediatrician, denying child care to a quarter million working parents.

Those are not the values or the priorities of the American people; but it is becoming increasingly clear that they are the priorities of the Republican Party, the Republican House leadership, the Republican administration, and the party that controls all three branches of government right now.

Let us take a look. What other priorities do the Republicans bring to bear with this reconciliation package?

One, let us make it harder for people to attend college. If you attended college in the last 50 years, you received financial aid from the Federal Government. Following World War II, you had the benefit of the GI Bill. Eight million veterans were given education vouchers at the same time it doubled the number of homeowners.

Thirty-five years ago, Congress passed the Higher Education Act and said that the Federal Government was going to open the doors of colleges, regardless of family wealth; that, in fact, education was the great equalizer in

this country, that because of your God-given talent you could succeed. Federal student aid has helped millions of people go to college who otherwise might never have had that opportunity.

This bill turns its back on that commitment. It leaves the typical student borrower, and I say to young people and their families today, understand this, you are already saddled with $17,500 in debt and you are going to pay an additional $5,800 in interest and taxes over the life of your loan if this bill is passed.

At a time when our Nation faces unprecedented competition from the likes of China and India, this majority puts up financial barriers that prevent 4.4 million high school graduates from attending a 4-year public college over the next decade; 123,000 students in my State of Connecticut alone will not be able to attend college. This when the United States is projected to face a shortage of up to 12 million college-educated workers by the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation impacts children and families. It also strips protections which would guarantee more than 5 million children who receive the medical services they need no longer receive them: medical health services, optical care, hearing aids, cuts to child support enforcement by 40 percent, eliminating the federally funded foster care benefits for grandparents and relatives of abused and neglected children. This bill goes out of its way to make the lives of Americans already living on the margins even more difficult.

A final point. Food stamps, a program which goes straight to the heart of the government's responsibility, a moral responsibility to people, 25 million people in this Nation rely on food stamps. It is a program of efficiency and competence. The cuts result in 300,000 food stamp recipients losing eligibility. That includes 40,000 children. When you cut food stamps, which is the direct measure for eligibility for the school lunch program, that means 40,000 kids will no longer be eligible for a school breakfast program or a school lunch program.

Why? Why are we doing this? Let us lay it on the table. It is about tax cuts, tax cuts for those who need them least. Fifty-three percent of the tax cuts go to the upper 1 or 2 percent of the public making over $1 million a year. $70 billion of tax cuts, capital gains, and dividend tax cuts go to Americans who are living lives of comfort and lives of leisure. And paying for these tax cuts will be 40,000 kids going hungry.

The majority is effectively saying, so much for morality, so much for values, so much for the common good. These are Republican priorities. They are not mine. They are not my constituents. I think we will all learn over the course of the next year they are not the American people's. This Nation must understand what is potentially going to befall them if this bill is passed. I urge you to stand tall and say ''no'' to these cuts which will do nothing but ravage the good people of this Nation.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding to me and allowing all of us to come to the floor today to talk about what is really meaningful in the budget. There is no one in this House that knows every paragraph and every decimal point in this budget reconciliation bill better than the gentleman from South Carolina, and no one who knows better, too, the pain and the suffering that you can read between the lines.

Besides the U.S. Constitution, there is no document more defining of our priorities and our values and our morality than budgets. Yes, budgets. Even though we have pages of numbers, it is a moral document. I want to read from an article written by the religion writer for the Chicago Sun-Times paper last Friday. This is what Cathleen Falsani had to say.

She wrote: ''This week, as Republican leaders try to force a monstrous $50 billion budget cut designed allegedly to offset the mounting costs of hurricane-related aid through Congress, it is clear that the Bush administration's moral compass has been lost.

''The proposed budget cuts, part of the so-called budget reconciliation, would have devastating effects on the poorest, most vulnerable Americans, while allowing tax relief for the rich.

''The massive budget reductions would include billions of dollars from pension protection and student loan programs.'' She goes on to list them.

Then she says: ''Maybe Republican leaders should consider proposing an open season on the homeless, or the resurrection of debtors' prisons while they're at it. Is this the kind of leadership the majority of voters who, according to pollsters at the time, cast their ballots in the 2004 based on moral values? Is this what they had in mind?'', she asks.

''Is this what faith-based compassionate conservatism looks like? Is our Nation more moral, more secure, or spiritually healthy than it was a year ago? And, to address my fellow Christian voters specifically,'' she asks, ''has the Good News been advanced in any way? No, absolutely not,'' she says.

She goes on to describe ''all 65 bishops at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have signed a letter to Members of Congress vehemently opposing the proposed budget cuts, saying in part 'The biblical record is clear. The scriptural witness on which our faith tradition stands speaks dramatically to God's concern for and solidarity with the poor and oppressed communities while speaking firmly in opposition to governments whose policies place narrow economic interests driven by greed above the common good.' ''

That is what the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America said. She goes on to say: ''The Evangelical Christian theologian and leader, Jim Wallis, founder of Sojourners, a national network of progressive Christian peace and justice activists, led an ecumenical gathering of religious leaders in a protest at the Capitol building last Thursday, calling the proposed cuts 'a moral travesty.' '' This is quoting Jim Wallis: ''Instead of wearing bracelets that ask, 'what would Jesus do,' perhaps some Republican should ponder, 'what would Jesus cut?' ''

The author writes: ''The immorality, by any religious tradition's measure, of the proposed $50 billion budget reconciliation package, is brazen. If enacted, it would prove only to increase the suffering of the already struggling poor, including tens of thousands who lost everything along the gulf coast. Maybe immoral isn't the appropriate word,'' Kathleen Falsani says. ''Maybe immoral isn't the appropriate word. Downright evil is a better description.''

I thank my colleague for allowing me to read this article. I think it is instructive to all Members of Congress and all people of faith as well.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her presentation, and I yield now to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the budget reconciliation process has been used since 1974 as a vehicle to set priorities, enact fiscal discipline, and reduce deficits. The last three budget reconciliation packages, which were passed in 1990, 1993, and 1997, each attempted to reduce the deficit by an average of $367 billion over 5 years.

However, this year, the Republican majority has decided to split the budget reconciliation package into two parts. The first, which will come before this Chamber this week, likely on Thursday, will make deep cuts to vital government initiatives that directly improve the lives of millions of average Americans. The second, which may not come to the floor until after Thanksgiving, would further extend tax cuts to corporations and to individuals in the very highest income brackets.

When taken together, the Republican reconciliation package will add $35 billion to the Federal deficit over the next 5 years, a fact that should disprove the other side's claim that this is an attempt to enact fiscal discipline or restore our budget to balance. It does not.

The fact that we are handling this process in piecemeal does not hide the majority party's preference for providing tax cuts that benefit only a limited number of people and corporations rather than making the investments in our future that will enable hard-working families and our communities to meet their obligations.

For example: instead of repairing tomorrow's workforce by helping more Americans, including tens of thousands of young people striving to be prepared for jobs of the future to obtain college

degrees, the Republicans are slashing $9 billion from government-sponsored student loans.

Instead of working to expand access to health care, even in the face of a major flu epidemic, the Republicans are working to restrict access and to limit eligibility for Medicaid, the very program that ensures that mothers and children and working people with special health needs get the care that they require.

And the third example: instead of fully equipping our public safety officers, our police officers, firefighters, and transit personnel with the needed communication equipment, the Republicans would continue to underfund important homeland security initiatives.

The Republicans, through the reconciliation process, have made clear that they prioritize tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans and to very few large corporations at the expense of creating opportunities for hard-working Americans and helping Americans meet their responsibilities. Moreover, they have chosen political rhetoric over honest budgeting by failing to consider both aspects of their proposals, the spending cuts and the tax breaks, at the same time in the same bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to urge Members on both sides of the aisle who believe in fiscal responsibility, who believe in sound budgetary principles to oppose this reconciliation measure that we will be considering in the coming days and weeks.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her statement, and I yield now to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL), and I would remind the gentleman that we have about 6 minutes left. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). The gentleman is correct.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) for allocating this time to me.

We began this session with an idea and a plan that would privatize Social Security. I thought that was the worst idea that we would encounter. But now that that argument is at last behind us, now we can see the reality of the President's budget process. This proposal that we are about to entertain on Thursday is a fiscal disaster. It not only forces painful cuts to programs that serve regular people; it awards large new tax cuts to people who already are the most privileged in our society.

When President Clinton left office, the country was running a $236 billion surplus. We were on track to have a $5.6 trillion surplus over the next 10 years. Now, let me tell you what that would have done. That would have allowed us to fix Social Security, to fix Medicare, to pay down the debt, and to provide modest tax cuts for middle-income Americans. Instead, we have cut taxes five times while we are fighting two wars.

And what is the result? Well, a month and a half ago to 2 months ago, the Humvees just arrived in Iraq. The body armor has just begun to arrive in Iraq. For those men and women who serve us honorably every single day in the American military, the equipment is just starting to arrive.

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But what do we have time to do here? Let us cut Medicare. Let us chop Medicaid. Let us go after student loans. Let us cut back on home heating oil for the most vulnerable among us in the Northeast; and, with a straight face, let us cut taxes by $70 billion over the next couple of weeks.

Think of this Congress, what it did with the Clinton surplus: $5.6 trillion of surplus projected over 10 years, and this Congress cuts taxes and yanks $1.3 trillion out of the budget and then declares Social Security has a problem after they have taken that money away.

You hear from the Members of this body on the other side of the aisle about supply-side economics. I do not know any primary supply-side economists left who are accepted in the academy. Nobody buys that argument any more based upon the budget deficits the Nation is running.

We were on a sterling course of fiscal responsibility in this body. Just when people said it could not be done, we got it done. We balanced the budget, projected large-term surpluses, and we had this grand opportunity to take on some of the issues we would all like to address. But what has happened now? Is there anybody here who believes that we are not going to need a lot more money for Iraq? A lot more money for Afghanistan? Those dollars are going to be necessary. The same institution that voted to send us there, this Congress, I hope will not dare to cut back on what these men and women need. But I can tell you this: the budget they have put in front of us takes us precisely there. You cannot have it both ways, and we have learned that the hard way. But I will say this about the majority in this body, they will keep going.

Most conventional political figures see a stop sign and they stop. Not here, they will keep going. Cut programs for the neediest and cut taxes for the strongest. I am reminded of Matthew when he said it is our goal and our job to clothe the naked and to feed the poor; and the Republicans here would add, and to take care of the wealthy and to take care of the strong.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina.

In our pledge every day, we pledge one Nation under God with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. Speaker, with this reconciliation package, this is not one Nation, one liberty and justice for all. If you look at those students, this is not liberty and justice for all. For students today, only 10 percent of children from working-class families graduate from college by the age of 24 as compared to 58 percent of upper-middle-class and wealthy families. This is not liberty and justice for all.

If you are disabled, mentally retarded, poor, hungry or a foster family, this is not liberty and justice for all. This reconciliation package slams the door on those with disabilities trying to gain a foothold in society. It cuts the Medicaid program, taking away opportunity from those with intellectual difficulties. It takes food out of the mouths of the poorest children in our society. And it goes after those that are trying to make an opportunity for themselves in this society by getting an education when an education is more important than at any other time in American history.

Today, our economy is about an economy of ideas. If we do not provide education for every single American, we are consigning those without an education to second-class status. This reconciliation bill consigns millions of Americans to second-class status by cutting aid to education that opens up the doors of opportunity for millions of Americans.

Franklin Roosevelt said the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance to those who have much; it is whether we provide enough to those who have too little. This reconciliation package fails that test as well.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina for his leadership on this issue.

After 5 years of record debts and deficits, the other side of the aisle is demanding cuts to the programs that help Americans most in need. We showed in the 1990s that this government can be fiscally disciplined and compassionate to our neighbors most in need at the same time. The cuts before us now will not restore fiscal sanity; and they certainly are not compassionate, not even to the people who are suffering now from the recent hurricanes.

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We showed in the 1990s that this government can be fiscally disciplined and compassionate to our neighbors most in need at the same time.

The cuts before us now will not magically restore fiscal sanity, and they certainly are not compassionate, not even to the people devastated by recent hurricanes.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle may be selling these cuts as a matter of budget principle, but the fact remains that their

budget will still increase the deficit by more than 100 billion.

Even more outrageous is that these cuts would make our government—which is meant to be of the people and for the people—less responsive to the people who need its help most.

Fewer food stamps. Reduced student loans. Less aid for foster care. Reduced Medicaid access.

And we all saw how Katrina disproportionately devastated low-income Americans.

Those Americans already lost their homes and their livelihoods, now they are in line to lose the federal aid that could help them the most.

It isn't surprising—this same Congress that gives no-strings aid to Iraq also demands that residents of the Gulf Coast repay emergency disaster assistance.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the budget reconciliation—it's an uncompassionate and misguided bill.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. SPRATT, for yielding and for his superb leadership in presenting the case against the spending cuts contained in the first half of this misguided budget reconciliation package.

When the final budget resolution passed by a margin of only three votes back in April, who would have guessed that the Republican leadership would want to re-visit this legislation by actually making deeper cuts to health care, student loans, and food stamps—particularly in a time of national crisis?

And given that Congress has not enacted budget reconciliation since 1997, you would have thought that the Republican leadership could have put forward a more fair and balanced set of spending adjustments after preparing for eight years between reconciliations.

When you think about it, budget reconciliation is not much different than balancing a checkbook, unless, of course, you are referring to the way Congress balances its books.

On one side of the ledger, we have spending cuts—ostensibly to pay for rebuilding the Gulf Coast, but in reality to pay for the tax cuts that this leadership insists on passing despite three consecutive years of record-breaking deficits and $3 trillion in new debt.

Still, this reconciliation package doesn't even pay for the tax cuts. The net result is actually an increase in the deficit of at least $50 billion.

And in the other column, even after the tax cuts are in place, there won't be a dime left over to pay for reconstruction in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita or Wilma.

Like the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts—and like the class action, bankruptcy and needless tort reform on the Republican agenda—this Administration's failed economic policies and misplaced priorities are on display again this week in the form of the ''Reconciliation Spending Cuts Act of 2005.''

Championing the values and priorities of the wealthiest at the expense of the middle class—and by punching holes in the safety net—are hallmarks of this Administration but not the solution we need today to alleviate the misery in the Gulf Coast or ease the squeeze on the middle class.

As we build new universities in Baghdad, schools across the United States are falling apart. How can we in good conscious cut student loans after the College Board recently reported tuition continues to rise faster than the rate of inflation?

To illustrate this point, consider that under this legislation, someone earning over $1 million stands to gain a tax break of $19,000—on top of the average $103,000 tax cut they already receive—whereas the typical student borrower, already saddled with $17,500 in debt, would face new fees and higher interest charges that could cost up to an additional $5,800.

And yet, no one in this Administration has suggested putting Iraqi reconstruction money on the table. We simply cannot afford the continuing sacrifices and investments there at the expense of our priorities here at home. Nor has there been any hint that the tax cuts should be suspended for those earning more than $400,000 or that we should scale back the estate tax cut, which has no impact on nearly 98 percent of American families.

None of this is on the table, even though federal spending has grown by a third and record surpluses became record deficits since President Bush took office. With the most expensive tax cuts not yet fully phased-in, these policies threaten to expand the deficit beyond what we and future generations of Americans can afford.

Common sense tells us that when you're in a hole, stop digging. But not only are we still digging, we are falling deeper into new fiscal depths with this budget.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Katrina was a tragic reminder that too many American families are struggling in today's economy. Squeezing them harder, as this reconciliation legislation would do, is not the answer. It takes our nation in the wrong direction, and I urge my colleagues to defeat it.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Key Points About Reconciliation:

1. All of these spending cuts will be used to offset tax cuts, not the costs of hurricane response or deficit reduction.

2. Spending cuts threaten vital services, including services for hurricane victims.

3. Even with these spending cuts, the Republican budget resolution still increases the deficit by more than $100 billion over five years.

4. Republicans reveal a double standard in proposing to offset hurricane costs but not war costs or tax cuts.

Summary of Cuts: The $53.9 billion in cuts is $14.8 billion higher than the reconciliation cuts that the Senate is considering.

The $53.9 billion in cuts marks a 56 percent increase from the $34.7 billion in reconciled spending cuts included in this year's budget resolution.

The budget cuts do not offset spending for hurricane reconstruction—they go towards offsetting $106 billion in tax cuts.

Why does republican leadership insist on offsetting the cost of rebuilding damage from Katrina, but not the cost rebuilding Iraq?

The objectionable cuts threaten vital services that people depend on:

1. Medicaid—The bill cuts Medicaid spending by $11.9 billion.

a. $8.8 billion will fall upon beneficiaries in the form of increases in cost-sharing and premiums.

b. ''Flexibility'' that will allow states to cut benefit packages for certain individuals.

c. Provisions that will make it harder for some seniors to access needed long-term care.

2. Student Loans—The bill cuts spending on student loan programs by $14.3 billion over five years.

a. Primarily through increases in the interest rates and fees that students pay as well as some reductions in subsidies to lenders.

b. At a time when college costs are rising faster than inflation, the Committee is making the largest cut in the history of the student loan programs.

3. Food Stamps—The legislation imposes cuts to food stamps of $844 million over five years (2006–2010).

a. Savings are achieved by adopting the President's proposal to limit categorical eligibility for food stamps to TANF recipients and increasing the in-country waiting period for legal immigrants to seven years. Under current law, 44 percent of those eligible for food stamps do not participate in the program. Changes such as these may mean even fewer vulnerable children and working families who qualify for nutrition benefits will actually receive them.

4. Children—

a. The legislation cuts $4.9 billion from child support programs over five years.

i. This cut will reduce states' capacity to establish and enforce child support orders. Custodial parents will receive $7.1 billion less child support over five years and $21.3 billion less over ten years.

b. The Committee cut $397 million from foster care over five years by limiting children's eligibility for federally funded foster care payments.

i. The committee saved another $180 million by limiting circumstances under which states can receive federal funding for services provided to children.

CORRECTING AMERICA'S IMBALANCED TRADING RELATIONSHIPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the heels of President Bush's failed trade trip to Latin America to discuss our Nation's trade policy, a policy that continues to ship out American jobs, a policy that opens our doors to imports while other markets remain closed to us. Markets like Japan, markets like China, they keep their doors shut tight.

This is a policy that is hurting our country, not just today, but for tomorrow. It hurts our workers. It hurts our farmers; and, indeed, it truly hurts our future.

Our latest trade deficit numbers released last month for the month of August show yet another increase in America's trade deficit. The trade deficit for the month of August alone was $59 billion. For every billion dollars of deficit, we incur another 20,000 lost jobs. In a year, the loss to us is over three-quarters of a trillion dollars of more imports coming in than exports going out.

Last year our trade deficit was $668 billion; and in the first half of this year, this number clearly was increasing. This chart summarizes what has

been happening with the rise in imports over exports over the last 20 years. Every single year, after every single one of these trade agreements gets signed, the red ink gets deeper and deeper. It will not take long to reach a trillion dollars, which lops real economic growth off our gross domestic product.

According to one report, the higher price of oil this year alone could add an estimated 60 to $90 billion more to the trade deficit of 2006. The deficit represents jobs lost in our communities, lives changed forever, as well as a very real threat to the economic security of our country.

Trade agreements like, and Members know the names, NAFTA, CAFTA, PNTR, normal trade relations with China. I do not know what is normal about having hundreds of billions of dollars of deficit with any country where our jobs have been shipped elsewhere. We can see the cashing out of America.

The latest company that tells us they are ready to leave is Delphi, based in Flint, Michigan, a corporation that employs over 50,000 people nationwide, telling workers they have to take a two-thirds cut in wages, pensions gone, health benefit gone. And what they are basically doing, they are following their major customer, which is General Motors, which has cashed out to Mexico, and now the suppliers are following suit.

Here is how the trade model works: half of Delphi's sales go to General Motors. Therefore, if General Motors outsources, so will Delphi. If General Motors goes to Mexico, which is has, it is the largest employer in Mexico after the government of Mexico and the oil industry, so will Delphi go. How destructive this trend is to our future as we see our workers work for lower wages and our families shopping now at Wal-Mart to get bargain prices. Imagine, Wal-Mart, the largest employer in the United States of America. We are becoming a distributor not a manufacturer, and our people are not earning enough to shop at the department stores that they used to. Many of those have closed in the major metropolitan areas of our country.

What we find are the Wall Street investors, who have a global reach and love to get richer than any of us could ever imagine, are taking production around the world. Franklin Roosevelt had it right: he called them the malefactors of great wealth. They do great damage in their path.

Today I do not want to just draw attention to what has been happening to our economy and working people, but I want to draw attention to what we can do. Sadly, President Bush appears to be trying to expand NAFTA with his recent trip down to Latin America, and the people down there have awakened to what these trade agreements really mean to them. The Free Trade Agreement of the Americas appears to be dying a slow death.

But I have a different idea, and so do some of my colleagues. This week we are introducing a bill, the Balancing Trade Act of 2005, which will require action on the part of the President when America faces deficits like we see today. It would require the President to take action to correct these imbalanced trading relationships with any nation where our deficit with them would equal $10 billion in any 3-year period, in other words, where that $10 billion would exist for 3 consecutive years.

Our trade balance, for example, with both of our NAFTA trading partners has been more than $10 billion in deficit for the last 3 years. NAFTA has basically been a great sucking sound of jobs out of this country.

Our trade deficit with China has been greater than $100 billion this year and over the last 3 years, and rising every single year. It is more lost jobs, and this bill says it is time to stop the music; it is time to start doing something about this.

In order to correct accounts that are seriously in the red, someone has to go back and look at the books. It is a responsible approach, one that the executive branch should be taking and one that is long overdue. I ask my colleagues to look at the Balancing Trade Act of 2005 and join us as cosponsors to right America's very imbalanced trading relations with the world.

THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO UNDERCUT AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago, many heard my colleagues join in a full discussion on the very important debate that we will engage in this coming week regarding the Budget Reconciliation Act. Frankly, I wish we could go back to the days of old of this institution when you could have a thorough debate. The Founding Fathers established this august body, some 13 colonies; and when they engaged in a debate, it was just that: it was a thorough analysis. It was a long, extended analysis of the issue at hand. I imagine that might have been the setting in the Constitutional Convention when we established this Nation and we premised it on democracy.

One day of debate certainly does not equal the moment of importance to be voting on what we call a budget reconciliation bill when so many lives will be impacted.

Just a few minutes ago, I hung up from a call with my local authorities who were speaking to me about the enormous mounting need for resources in the gulf region. We know how generous Americans have been, but it is important to note that States like Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana are still trying to work with the many Hurricane Katrina survivors, our neighbors on the east coast and Florida, impacted by Wilma, and now our neighbors to the north impacted by this terrible tornado in Indiana and Kentucky. It says that we must be empathetic and sympathetic and our budget reconciliation has to address the idea of being willing to give people, not a hand out, but a hand up.

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Well, Mr. Speaker I do not see how we can possibly do that under the heavy burden of between $70 billion and $200 billion in tax cuts. It just does not work, the sacrifice that our soldiers are making in the week of the veterans celebration, commemoration, so many veterans who have come home from Iraq who are now in need of hospital care and counseling and jobs. As we honor them this Friday, what sense does it make to be able to say to these veterans who may ultimately either want to be able to send their young people, their children, to school because so many of them are Reservists, that we would in this day, one day, raid student aid?

The single largest cut to student aid will occur if this budget passes on Thursday, $14 billion, $14.33 billion cut from student aid, $7.8 billion in new charges on student aid for parent-borrowers. Those are the same parents who are seeing their salaries go down, who are seeing a consolidation of their companies and, therefore, layoffs, who are seeing a lack of increase in their salaries, who have not seen an increase in the minimum wage for years.

We cannot afford this kind of raid on the Treasury so that students who are only seeking an opportunity for a hand up and not a handout are going to be the victims of this budget reconciliation.

Might I also suggest that we have better priorities than to give tax cuts to the 1 percent richest in America. We have better priorities than to provide for a $200 billion tax cut that takes place in 2006. We can document that tax cuts do not energize the economy. We can document that it is jobs, that it is the investment in the building of jobs.

It will be the building of homes in the gulf region, creating opportunities for American workers. It will be, in fact, the investment in students that will be the creation of jobs, not an average tax cut through 2010 without sunsets, this multibillion dollar tax cut that we can see and the income groups that will get it, the top 1% income earners in America. The amount of the tax cut here shows more than $87,000, going to the richest Americans. This is the kind of difficulty that we will face in this debate, and frankly, I believe that we can wait on those tax cuts.

What else we can wait on, Mr. Speaker, is the raid on Medicaid, because Medicaid will experience $12 billion in cuts over 5 years, $47.7 billion in cuts in Medicaid over 10 years. We believe,

as Democrats, that there should be no cuts.

So the message today is, let us do this in a bipartisan manner. This is no time to undercut America with cuts that will not save America. It will only hurt America. And, frankly, in the many constituencies that I have engaged in across America, not just Texas, we have nursing homes that are going to suffer, senior citizens that are going to suffer.

What about the 5-year look-back on a senior citizen to be able to be eligible for Medicaid and that particular senior citizen is destitute right now? We are going to force them to look back 5 years where there may have been a death, that their partner, their husband or their wife, may have died, and their income may have dropped drastically and it does not show that.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think we can do better. Something is not right and we can do better. Let us defeat the budget reconciliation. Let us work on behalf of the American people and the American young people.

THE DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, as the Members can tell, we are having a rather spirited debate in this body over something called the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. It is a little surprising that we would come here and not work in a bipartisan manner to try to actually reduce the deficit.

So we need to explore, Mr. Speaker, exactly why is it that we need to do this, why is it important that we on the Republican side of the aisle have put forth a plan to help reform the government, to help achieve savings for the beleaguered American family? I believe it is very important, Mr. Speaker, because I still believe that although we face a number of challenges, we still have enemies, terrible enemies, who want to seek to do our country woe; that we have challenges in filling up our cars and pickup trucks; that the cost of health care needs to come down. We have a number of challenges, Mr. Speaker, but ultimately we can address them.

America has faced even greater challenges than that before. If we will just preserve freedom, if we will preserve opportunity, if we will protect the family budget from the explosive growth of the Federal budget, I still believe there is no limit to what we, the people in America, can achieve.

But this is a very important debate. And the vote on this act, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, Mr. Speaker, is going to be one of the most important votes that we cast this year because as our Nation faces a number of fiscal challenges in trying to pay for a number of our programs like Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security and, on top of that, the devastating hurricanes that have hit our great Nation, as we seek ways to pay for those, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day there are only three different ways we can do it.

Either, number one, we are going to raise taxes again on the American people, as the Democrats want to do, and they do not claim they want to do it, but I assure the Members, Mr. Speaker, they do. So number one, we are either going to raise taxes on the American people; or number two, we are going to pass debt on to our children yet again, as unconscionable as that is; or number three, Mr. Speaker, again we can go to our plan, our plan to reform government programs so that we can achieve savings for the American people. And that is what this debate is going to be about.

We can have a bright future. But if we do not do it, Mr. Speaker, if we do not start today on this plan to reform government programs to achieve savings for the American people, I fear that our future could be dark.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I have a chart here. It is a multicolored chart, and it talks about what we call in Washington ''entitlement spending,'' kind of mandatory spending that is on automatic pilot. Much of it is good, but it is growing beyond our ability to pay for it.

This is 2003, and on this side of our chart we have a percentage, and this talks about the percent of our economy that we are spending right now on government.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, all of this spending here, and this year is 2003, just a couple years ago, we were spending roughly 20 percent of our economy on the Federal Government. This line here is our tax revenues, which stays fairly consistent, just a little bit below 20 percent of our economy.

But, Mr. Speaker, as the years go by, if we do not reform these programs, we can look at the year 2015, the year 2030, and the year 2040. Mr. Speaker, if we do not start to reform today, we are on the verge of doubling the size of government in one generation.

What is that going to mean to our children? What is that going to mean to their standard of living? We are on the verge of being the first generation perhaps in the entirety of American history to leave our children a lower standard of living than we enjoyed. And, Mr. Speaker, I just believe that is absolutely unconscionable. We must begin this process of reforms.

Again, we are on the verge of doubling the size of government, and that is just leaving the programs alone. Doing what the Democrats want us to do, turning our back on future generations, is going to double the size of government, taking away that hope, taking away those jobs, taking away those opportunities. How are we going to afford then to put gas in our pickup trucks? How are we going to afford to send our children to college? How are we going to afford paying our heating bills when Uncle Sam says, No, we are going to have to take twice as much of the economy just to pay for the Federal Government. What does this translate into for families all across America?

Again, if anybody was listening to the earlier debate, we did not hear the Democrats say this, but this is their plan. We have a plan to reform government programs, to achieve savings for the American people. They have a program to double taxes on the American people in one generation. Look at what is going to happen to the average family as the years go by, and this is 2005.

If the Democrats have their way, they will increase taxes on American families almost immediately by $4,000 a family. Well, there just went a down payment, a huge down payment on a car to get, perhaps, a parent to work. There just went, in some places, a semester or two of college. There just went no telling how many months of child care with the Democrat plan to immediately increase taxes on the American people. And as time goes by to 2009 and 2017 and 2027, increasingly, taxes go up and up and up.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, it really comes down to the question: Do we have a spending problem in Washington or do we have a taxing problem in Washington? And I think as we carry on with this debate, the American people will agree that what we really have here is a spending problem, that spending is out of control in Washington, DC. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, as do so many of my colleagues, that with a good plan of reform to achieve these savings, that we can actually deliver better health care, better retirement security for our seniors at, frankly, a lower cost.

And it is just so sad, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot seemingly get any Democrat from this side of the aisle to come join with us. And it is my fear, Mr. Speaker, that they are more concerned about the next election than they are the next generation.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HENSARLING. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I think it is really important that if Members look at the deficit reduction package that we are looking at, it is a reform package that creates savings as opposed to the typical tax-and-spend tactics of the other party, and reform is what most of us, Democrat or Republican, have come to Washington to do.

How many times do people running for Congress go to the local Rotary Club and say we have got to run government more like a business, we have got to end the duplications and the bureaucracy, we have to cut the red tape? And yet here is an opportunity to have some great bipartisan reforms, and all we are doing is getting criticism. And

it is the same old broken record we hear from the Democrats that this is all about cuts.

I was here when we did welfare reform, and the same people were saying that we are pushing people out in the streets, even though welfare reform has been a success, and incidentally, was signed into law by President Clinton. But when a person in today's world thinks about what companies are doing great, they think about Verizon or UPS or Starbucks or Coca-Cola or McDonald's, and they think there are a lot of things going on in the private sector. And they turn around and think what do we have in the Federal Government? FEMA, the IRS, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the United States Postal Service, and then the local motor vehicle department.

One can go into McDonald's and order food for a busload of teenagers coming back from a homecoming football game and get the food faster than they can going into the post office and getting a book of stamps. And I think it is relevant for people to realize we should not accept second best, third best, and fourth best from the United States Government. This package takes a step in that reform, and it does so by creating a lot of savings for us.

I am an agriculture guy, and I think it is really important to talk about the food stamp portion. We hear time and time again, oh, the agriculture budget is too much and you guys should do something about it. Well, 60 percent of the budget is actually for food stamps. Food stamps have increased from $17.7 billion in 2001 to $35 billion today, $35 billion.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, since the gentleman serves on the Agriculture Committee, which has jurisdiction over the food stamp program, we just heard folks on the other side of the aisle, the Democrats, talk about massive cuts in the food stamp budget. But is it not true that even after we reform these programs, we will spend more on food stamps next year than we did last year?

Mr. KINGSTON. $250 million more next year than we are spending this year on food stamps, Mr. Speaker. And yet only in Washington, DC, only in that fantasy world that competes with Disneyland when it comes to creating make-believe, would people call it a cut. Because what we want to do is look at the increase, and we have determined that we can reduce one-half of 1 percent of the total food stamp budget, about one-half of 1 percent. Food stamps will still increase $250 million, and yet people can go down to the floor of the House with a straight face and say that is a cut. I do not know how they do it.

If I am giving my child an allowance of $10 and I am going to increase it to $15, but he wants $16, I still have not cut his allowance. I cannot get away with that back in Savannah, Georgia, but somehow the Democrat Party can do that with a straight face in Washington.

□ 1530

If nothing else, you have to admire their nerve.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield again, it reminds me that in this great body everybody is entitled to their own opinion, but they are not entitled to their own facts. The fact is that these budgets are still increasing, even after our reforms.

But another question for the gentleman: is not one of the suggested reforms that we are offering here simply to extend for noncitizens, people who are not citizens of the United States of America, supposedly people who came here who wanted to roll up their sleeves and seek freedom and opportunity, a waiting period of 7 years instead of 5 before they receive food stamps, for noncitizens? Is that correct?

Mr. KINGSTON. Yes. The irony is that under President Clinton's signed welfare reform plan, originally you had to be in the United States of America 10 years before you were eligible to receive food stamps. That was later reduced to 5 years. And what we are saying is, you know what? That got real expensive. Let us just change it to 7 years. Yet, people are screaming bloody murder, and it is the same folks who say we have to do something about our illegal immigration and our immigration laws in general.

But remember, when you come to the United States of America and you become a citizen, noncitizens, you actually have to sign a waiver saying that you would not get public assistance benefits, you would not become a ward of the State. We are saying okay, listen, at least keep your word for 7 years. Yet, there again, we hear all the hysteria and rhetoric, which makes people just feel less belief in the government. As the gentleman said, people just pick and choose their own facts here. That is not allowed in the real world.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments to help illustrate the point again that almost every single budget for these programs will increase next year over last year. That is just a simple fact.

It is hard for me to believe that there are people in America who are going to find it highly controversial that those who supposedly signed a contract not to be wards of the State, those who came here for jobs and for freedom and for opportunity, that somehow it is a draconian cut to ask them to wait for 7 years instead of 5 years to be on food stamps.

Dollars have alternative uses. So the millions you save by this simple reform are millions of dollars that instead now can go to help relieve human suffering along the gulf coast. It could go to increase the number of mammograms for indigent women in the Medicaid program. It is dollars that could be used to help fund more college scholarships. But instead, our friends on the other side of the aisle said, no, we cannot have any reforms, we cannot have any reforms. It is all about massive cuts.

Mr. KINGSTON. In the nanny state, the liberal Democrats envision that the United States has to have Big Government sitting by your cradle when you are born and taking you to your grave when you die 75 years later or whatever. In their nanny-state vision, they are convinced that we have to pay for every step of your progress along the way.

One of the things they are screaming about now is nobody will be able to go to college because the Federal Government will not be able to step in and pay for your tuition. Well, the Federal Government does have assistance for people who deserve a college education and who have worked hard for it. But in the food chain, lenders make a minimum of 9.5 percent loaning you the money. Now, most people right now are not getting 9.5 percent on their investments.

What we are saying is, we are going to cut out that minimum of 9.5 percent that the lenders are getting on college education loans. Yet, again, we hear from the other side that that is a cut. I have trouble following them. I like fiction, I like crazy movies of fantasy, but they go beyond the page of what is real.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman makes another great point, and that is that only the government, only the government would be so foolish as to pay two and three times the market rate for a loan to send somebody to college. Yet, in the twisted logic of our friends on that side of the aisle, they say, well, you are cutting student loans by not giving all of these great surpluses to the lenders. I mean, it is complete nonsense. Again, there are so many other reforms we can make that I believe will help improve retirement security and health care at a lower cost.

I am very happy that another gentleman from Georgia has joined us this afternoon who is a doctor, and this body could use more doctors; somebody who has extensive experience in dealing with Medicare and Medicaid. We are hearing all the scare tactics on the other side of the aisle. Frankly, we have heard them for 50 years, but we continue to hear it.

What we do know is this: Medicare is growing at 9 percent a year. Medicaid is growing at 7.8 percent a year. Now, these are important programs but; Mr. Speaker, they were designed back about the time I was born. They have not kept pace with the pace of medicine. They are not helping the people today as they once were, and there are so many reforms we can make to save them, because if we do not save them today, if we do not take the steps to reform, Medicare and Medicaid will simply not be around for my children.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) to tell us a little bit about his insights into those programs.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for controlling the hour, for bringing this important information to us, and for allowing me to weigh in on it.

Mr. Speaker, it is kind of interesting that the other side of the aisle, when we had a plan to reform another mandatory, big, mandatory spending part of our budget, and that is Social Security, they wanted to say that, no, we do not need to be addressing that right now, because we have other more serious problems, we have the serious problem with the mandatory spending in Medicare and Medicaid. So while they did not want to address the needed reform, good reform to save money and sustain that program for our seniors, for their retirement, now we want to try to come forward, this Republican leadership, with a plan, a good plan of government reform, so that we can effect meaningful savings, and that is exactly what we are here to talk about this afternoon. I thank my colleague for giving me an opportunity to weigh in on one of those items in particular, and that is the Medicaid program.

The Medicaid program is so out of control that it is rapidly approaching 50 percent of our State budgets. Within another 5 years, if we do not do something to control and to reform Medicaid spending, Mr. Speaker, then we will be up to 80 percent, and it will not be in the too distant future that it will absorb the total amount of our State budgets. We cannot let that happen.

In fact, the Governors Conference did great work on this. I want to commend the Democratic Governor of Virginia, Governor Warner, and the Republican Governor of Arkansas, Governor Huckabee, who together took this as an ad hoc committee that took on this responsibility and made some very, very significant, needed suggestions to reform Medicaid.

A perfect example would be in those States who are under a waiver program, Mr. Speaker, that allow Medicaid coverage for people up to 150, 185 percent of the poverty level, at those higher levels to start having a little bit of a copay, just a little bit of a copay, maybe $3 on a generic drug or $5 on a brand-name prescription that their physicians feel that they need, and possibly even, yes, for the higher-income people under the waiver program to have a little bit of a deductible, to ask them, to ask these beneficiaries to show a little bit of responsibility for their own health, for their own health care, and how the spending is utilized.

The gentleman from Texas is absolutely right: We desperately need Medicaid reform. Just listen to this: We want to put Medicaid on a more sustainable path; grow it, yes, absolutely. We are not here today to talk about cutting. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, they are always wanting to scare people, the poor, the elderly, the infirm: These greedy Republicans are on the verge of cutting your benefits. Not at all. It is just reducing the growth rate by one-tenth of 1 percent. We need to do that. Who would argue that we need to root out waste, fraud, and abuse from the Medicaid program or, in fact, the Medicare program? We want to make sure that we give flexibility to the States to enact, if need be, some copays and some deductibles.

But pharmaceutical spending is out of control, as it certainly is. Listen to this: Medicaid once paid $5,336 for a prescription that only cost the pharmacist $88 to obtain. The Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General found, this was back in 2002, that Medicaid reimbursements exceeded pharmacists' true costs during that year, 2002, exceeded the actual cost by $1.5 billion.

Every dollar wasted on overpayment is a dollar that does not go to the patients who truly need that benefit.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for just one point, and I think I heard the gentleman correctly that the government paid over $1,000 for a prescription that should have cost approximately how much?

Mr. GINGREY. Well, let me repeat that, because I know it sounds unbelievable. It is even more unbelievable than the gentleman from Texas just stated. Medicaid once paid $5,000, not $1,000, but $5,336 for a prescription that only cost the pharmacist $88 to obtain. Now, was that a mistake on the part of the pharmacist? Possibly. We are not trying to single out any individual.

But the point is that there is so much waste, fraud, and abuse; and this oversight is needed. We absolutely need it.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield again, does that not mean, though, as we listen to the rhetoric by our Democratic friends on this side of the aisle, though, that by rooting out just this one waste, we would say somehow that we have cut health care for the poor by $5,000 because we found this waste, we found this fraud? It is again just one story out of countless stories about how you can reform government and still save money for American families.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, there is no question. Another thing that is astounding, and I think that we cannot state this often enough, is the fact that the nursing home reimbursements in this country, probably close to 80 percent of nursing home reimbursement is through the Medicaid program, and most of those dollars are Federal tax dollars. There is a State match, of course. For example, in my State, it is 60/40. The States with lower average incomes appropriately pay less. But when we are in a situation where people game the system to get their loved ones into a nursing home and hide their wealth, I mean, it is understandable why they might be inclined to want to do that, but that is taking money directly away from these children, many of whom are disabled. We have something called the waiting list for care, home-bound care for disabled people and pregnant women who are not getting prenatal care, and all of this money needs to be spent wisely and spent appropriately.

So I thank my colleague for letting me as a physician Member to weight in on some of these things. I have seen certainly not just since I have been a Member in the 3 years that I have been here in this body, but also over 28 years of practicing and seeing the need for this kind of reform by the Republican Party, reform to government, this good plan of reform that will save money and effect better care in the long run.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank the gentleman for his leadership on health care issues in this body and his leadership in trying to protect the family budget for the Federal budget. The gentleman did such a great job tonight in helping illustrate, Mr. Speaker, that again, there are so many ways that we can help reform these programs to achieve savings for the American people. If we do not do it, again, we are looking at a future of having to double taxes on the American people just to balance the budget, an unconscionable future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, this whole Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 is designed to help reform government programs to bring about savings. More so than any other event that precipitated this was the terrible hurricanes that ravaged our Nation recently; and Congress, rightfully so, joined together, Republicans and Democrats, came together to help relieve this human suffering, and it was important that we do that. A great tragedy had occurred in our Nation. But many of us were convinced that we could not let a great natural tragedy of this generation turn into a great fiscal tragedy for the next.

So I think one Member, above all other Members, came to the floor of this House of Representatives and said, we need to offset this spending. He launched something called Operation Offset, as chairman of the Republican Study Committee, Congress's largest caucus, made up of those who care about faith and family and free enterprise and freedom and, due to his actions, we were able to come to this point today. Because we know there are only three ways, Mr. Speaker, that we can offset this spending.

□ 1545

More taxes on our children, more debt on our children, or finding a plan to reform government to achieve these savings. And with that, I would love to yield to the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, my dear friend, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE).

Mr. PENCE. Let me say I am deeply humbled by the gentleman's characterization of our efforts. There is not a

day goes by in this Congress that I am not grateful to the people of Texas for sending Congressman JEB HENSARLING to Washington, DC. His work, Mr. Speaker, on the Budget Committee, his work as the leading voice of fiscal restraint in the largest caucus in the House of Representatives has been seminal to the debate that we are engaged in, both in the House and, as we have motivated it, in the Senate; and I congratulate my colleague from the heart.

Mr. Speaker, I rise, along with my other colleagues today, in strong support of the Deficit Reduction Act. The numbers speak for themselves. And as I have listened to the opposition to this legislation speak, as I have listened to even the advocates of this legislation speak, we are spending a great deal of time in, specifically, distinguishing the trees from the forest. I would like to talk about the forest from the trees for a moment.

The forest is $8 trillion in national debt, a national debt that has swelled by 25 percent, $2 trillion in the last few years alone, a post-World War II high of per-family share of the national debt, I believe the number, the gentleman will correct me, in excess of $24,000 in obligations for every American family. It is a second mortgage on every American family, that $8 trillion in national debt.

We come into this well, this week, as our colleagues in the Senate did last week, and in the face of a hurricane of national debt, we are going to throw a pebble of $50 billion in savings. And in the context, Mr. Speaker, of a $2.5 trillion Federal budget, this is a modest effort, but a meaningful effort. And I rise to applaud it.

$8 trillion in national debt. And then as the gentleman from Texas observed, in 6 days, in the wake of the worst natural catastrophe in our country's history, the worst hurricane to strike the coast of this country in some three centuries, this Congress spent over $60 billion in 6 days. And the American people, and many Members of Congress simply stood astride that freight train of spending and yelled ''Stop.'' And it is in a very real sense, that, in part, which brings us to this impasse today, whether or not we, as a Republican majority, as a governing majority in America, are going to be able to make tough choices during tough times.

I believe that we will. I believe, as our colleagues in the Senate bravely did last week, I believe this Congress this week, will rise to this challenge because I believe it is precisely what the American people meant this majority to do, to be able to practice both generosity and fiscal discipline at the same time.

In a very real sense, I must say that as we saw $60 billion flow out of this institution in less than a week, in the aftermath of Katrina, I bristled at the posturing of some in the House and the Senate who went before the American people who were still grieving in our hearts at the extraordinary cost to families and communities along the gulf coast. And some in Congress stood up and said that we have done the hard work.

Well, getting out my grandchildren's credit card and borrowing $60 billion for the families and communities along the gulf coast is not hard. What we are doing this week with the leadership of Speaker DENNIS HASTERT and the leadership of this Republican majority, what the Senate did last week, is the hard work that the American people expect us to do. That being said, we will take a modest but meaningful step in the direction of ensuring that a catastrophe of nature does not become a catastrophe of death. But let us not overstate it.

And with this, I close. As we look at some $50 billion in savings over the next 5 years, we are hearing the remonstrations of the opposition that we are cutting Medicaid, we are cutting student loans, we are even cutting Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Programs. And it is simply not true. As much as it might warm the heart of this conservative for Congress to get out the sharp scalpel and truly go after that $8 trillion in national death, as the gentleman graciously assists me with the chart, that the baseline of changes in mandatory spending between this bill and the last mandatory spending was projected to grow, without my glasses on, at 6.4.

Mr. HENSARLING. If the gentleman will yield, I will be glad to read this.

Mr. PENCE. I will be glad to yield.

Mr. HENSARLING. It is such an instructive chart, Mr. Speaker, to show the American people that, contrary to the rhetoric of the Democrats who speak of their massive cuts, look how much money we have spent on what we call mandatory spending in 2005, roughly $1.5 trillion; and in our 5-year budget, if we are successful and achieve these savings, these mandatory programs will grow at 6.3 percent a year instead of 6.4, a most modest, modest step of reforms, yet necessary and important.

And I will yield back to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. PENCE. I thank the gentleman, having not brought my reading glasses.

What we are doing here is adjusting the arc from 6.4 growth to 6.3 percent. And as the gentleman from Georgia just said moments ago, in Washington that is what passes for a cut. And that is just false advertising in America today, and the American people are on to it. They know under this bill Medicaid will grow by 7 percent. They know that student financial aid will continue to increase. And they also know that there is a billion, a 50 percent increase, in low-income home energy assistance, over $1 billion in additional resources available.

This is modest, but meaningful pruning of the Federal budget. It is not, even though it may warm this conservative's heart, it does not represent the hard choices and deep cuts that, candidly, future Congresses and future generations will have to make to meet the unfunded obligations that this government faces in the next 50 years.

So I rise today to say, this is a good start. It is time to put our fiscal house in order. It is time to take that first step toward fiscal restraint.

I urge my colleagues to see this in context. For conservatives for whom it is not enough, accept it as an important first step. And for those less conservative in the Congress than me, which is most, see this as a modest first step in the direction of fiscal restraint that is so much needed in the wake of catastrophes of nature.

Mr. KINGSTON. The gentleman from Indiana has talked about this being a first step. I think controlling spending, fiscal responsibility is almost like daily exercise and daily diet. It cannot just be a vote once a year. It needs to be a daily exercise.

There are all kinds of things that we can talk about in our multitrillion-dollar budget. Zero-based budgeting. As an appropriator I can tell you when agencies come in to us, all they talk about is the new spending. They do not ever go back to why did we originally need the money. And I will give you an example.

We had a series of forest fires out West. When I was on the Interior Appropriations bill, we spent money to help react to fight the forest fires. And the next year, no fires, so we tried to take the money out of the budget. No fires, no fire money. But guess what? That was called a cut because people decided, oh, no. You are not going to go back to zero base on us.

I think we should look at a Grace-type commission, an outside, a BRAC-type commission that could look at the Federal agencies and figure out which ones of them can be eliminated, where are the duplications and so forth. I think we should talk seriously about ending earmarks or at least reducing earmarks for the coming year to offset the cost of Katrina and Iraq. And then after we pass this, I believe we should go back and look at a half percent or a 1 percent or a 2 percent across-the-board decrease, because all of this has to be done year after year. Because that Federal budget, when all the good taxpayers are home sleeping at night, it continues to grow and it gets out of hand.

And I just wanted to say we are hearing lots and lots of crying. And I am going to close with this because I know you have the gentleman from New Jersey and the gentlewoman from Tennessee here, but if you just think about it this way, that Medicaid, through all this screaming and yelling that we are hearing from the other side, will still grow next year by $66 billion; that is, if we get to reduce it by 0.03 percent, it will still grow by $66 billion. It is not a cut.

It is not going to do all the things that most conservatives would like done, but as Mr. PENCE said, this is a

step in the right direction. And I thank the gentleman from Texas for your time and your leadership on these issues.

Mr. HENSARLING. Well, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his clarity in debate, for his leadership on this floor, for helping be one of the very clear voices in trying to protect the family budget from the Federal budget and bring about reforms.

Mr. Speaker, I am now very happy to be joined by one of my dear friends in this body, someone who I believe exhibits more principle and more courage than just about anybody else in this body, one of the strongest leaders we have for limited government in the United States House. And with that, I would be happy to yield to my friend from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT).

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Well, I thank my friend from Texas for those words. And I thank you also for your leadership and the opportunity to join you this evening as you continue the battle for reform.

As we take up this critical matter of budget reform this week, I would ask my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to view this as a process not in terms of dollars and cents of savings and cuts, but more in the terms of what really is the proper role of the Federal Government.

The Republican Party, I think, is the party that gives more credit to the American people than the other side of the aisle ever will. It is the philosophy of keeping government close to the citizens and Federal Government in its proper place that put the Republican Party in the majority several years ago and has kept it there now for the last 10 years. Yet, I feel at times that political control can cause us to lose hold of what our Founding Fathers initially thought that our role should be.

But in forming any policy, as we discuss these issues, I think casting votes on the floor, the Constitution should be our guide, not simply the whims of the day. And so in any discussions on this, let me just bring us back to what one of our Founding Fathers of the Constitution told us back in Federalist 45 when he said, James Madison said:

''The powers delegated . . . to the Federal Government are few and Defined . . . The powers reserved to the several States will extend to all the objects which, in the ordinary course of affairs; concern the lives, liberties and properties of the people, and the internal order, improvement and prosperity of the State.''

If Mr. Madison was to join us here today, I would imagine that he would see very little difference between King George and London and today's bureaucrats here in Washington, D.C. when it comes to big government and meddling in local issues. Unfortunately, just as the Founders of the Constitution have long since passed, so have many of their principles which this system of government was set upon. And were they to return today to the halls of D.C. and Congress, they would see the government has grown out of all bounds.

They would see a Federal judiciary that has traded judicial self-restraint for judicial activism, and they would find a wildly inefficient Federal bureaucracy.

The framers saw the excesses of London and Versailles, the gross central powers, at the disposal of so few and at the expense of so many.

□ 1600

The government conceived by Madison and others was designed specifically to resist such a fate. Now, Alexis de Tocqueville famously observed the greatest genius of libertarians, egalitarian of early America, was that it bore absolutely no resemblance whatsoever to his native France. Indeed, men like Madison and de Tocqueville might wander the Halls today and find striking similarities between the opulent and power-laden prerevolutionary Versailles.

But short of storming the Bastille, I came to Congress in the 108th Congress convinced that something could be done, and we are working towards that endeavor today. We are working towards that endeavor in other fields as well, such as Congressional States and Community Rights Caucus to turn Congress back to the Constitution and the 10th amendment.

Many of my colleagues and others inside the Beltway forget that State taxpayers and Federal taxpayers are not simply separate groups of people. Americans from all over the country send their money to Washington, only for Washington to lose some of it, waste some of it and spend some of it in ways that may not be best for all of us. Take my State of New Jersey: for every dollar in taxes my State of New Jersey sends down to Washington, we only get 54 cents back. That does not make much sense to me, nor to the citizens of my State. New Jerseyans would be better if they kept most of that money back home for their own self-control and projects.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, this week provides the House with an opportunity to help restore the vision of our Founders, the vision of Ronald Reagan. Yes, we must look out for the least among us. Yes, we must protect the key interests that cannot be dealt with at any other level, but just as the 10th amendment states clearly, and I quote, ''The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by and to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people,'' all of us as elected representatives of the people.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that Members of this House keep those words in mind as we go through this week, as we consider this legislation, and truly need it here in Washington D.C. and remember to return the power back to the people.

Again, I commend the Member from Texas for his leadership in this endeavor.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for joining us this evening. I thank him for his leadership. I thank him for reminding us that ultimately this is a debate about the role of government in a free society, because too often it seems that our friends on the other side of the aisle believe nothing good has ever happened in America that was not the result of a Federal program: Without the Federal Government there would be no motherhood. Without the Federal Government, there would never be a meal placed on the table, there would be no Boy Scouts, there would be no baseball.

The truth is that it is freedom, it is individual freedom that counts in the lives of individuals and helps lift people out of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, I am now very happy that we have been joined by one of the true leaders and one of the more articulate and dynamic voices in this body on government reform, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his leadership on this issue and for constantly reminding those of us in this body that our work is to protect the family budget and be certain that we rein in that Federal budget.

To a comment, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman from Texas just made, talking about government, and so many people feeling that many times there is nothing good that happens unless it comes from the Federal Government. I have constituents who remind me repeatedly that every time we have a new Federal Government program that is to cure some ill in our country, that there is a cost that comes with that. Yes, there is the cost that comes with putting that program in place, the operational cost, the funding cost. But there is also a second cost. That is, if the Federal Government steps in to fill a void, then neither the private nor not-for-profit sector is going to step in and fill that void.

Mr. Speaker, to be quite honest with you, over the past few days, as we have talked about the Deficit Reduction Act, and beginning to put this body on the right track to reducing, spending, restraining the growth of government and then beginning to right-size government, right-size and reform government, I said there is another one, and it is with every program, there is a difficulty with getting that program back under control, because every program has a bureaucracy and every bureaucracy has a constituency. That is another cost for each and every program. Of course, they are all good ideas, but is it the proper role of government.

To the gentleman from Texas, I appreciate the chart that he has about mandatory spending and talking about baseline spending in the chairman's mark. I would like to make a couple of comments on this. We have talked about the baseline calling for 6.4 percent growth over the next 5 years; and

with the work that this body has already done and is continuing to do, we will see that growth move from 6.4 percent to 6.3 percent growth.

One of the things in our district we have talked about is that baseline. Now, as the gentleman from Texas says, the family budget, that is something where we sit down every year with a clean sheet of paper, a No. 2 pencil, and we start at zero and we work out and say what can we afford to put on particular categories this year. Unfortunately, taxes and fees seem to be the biggest of those categories. But we start with a clean sheet of paper and a No. 2 pencil.

Unfortunately, government does not do that. They start from what they spent this past year regardless of the effectiveness of the program, regardless of whether the program is still needed, regardless of whether it should be wound down, regardless of whether it has outlived its usefulness. That is where they start, with what they got last year.

Based on what they got last year, then they ask for an increase in that funding. Now, let us say they got $100 last year, and this year they are going to ask for $125. We come back and say, well, you can't have $125, but we'll give you $110. Then they are saying, oh, no, you've cut us $15. You can't do that. You can't do that. That's a cut.

As the gentleman from Texas said and the gentleman from Indiana, just a few moments ago, in Washingtonspeak, when you restrain the growth, that is a cut. That is the way many of those from the left who support constantly growing the bureaucracy, constantly giving the power and the money to bureaucrats in buildings, that is how they refer to this process.

For our constituents, I think it is so important that we work together on this, addressing that baseline, being certain we are restraining the growth and that we work to pull it down past 6.4 and 6.3 and reduce it even further and then get into that baseline and actually begin to make some reductions in that baseline in programs that may have outlived their usefulness.

I commend the gentleman from Texas for the work that he has done on the budget. I commend him for continuing to bring this issue and reminding us that it is important that the Federal budget continue to protect and work to protect the family budget.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments tonight, and especially reminding us that once again in this great body people are entitled to their own opinions. They are just simply not entitled to their own facts. The facts are that even after our exceedingly modest reform proposals are enacted, all this spending, all this Federal spending on automatic pilot will grow at 3.6 per year instead of 6.4, notwithstanding the threat to future generations, the incredible burdens on their futures and their hope and their opportunity.

Under this reform plan, Medicare will grow, Medicaid will grow, food stamps will grow; but we make commonsense reforms so that we manage to hopefully save the next generation from a fiscal tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to see that we have been joined by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CHOCOLA), another member of the Republican Study Committee, one who cosponsored the Family Budget Protection Act to try to reform this process and again save the family budget from the Federal budget.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Speaker, frankly, I had not planned on coming to join you tonight, but I was inspired by the comments from our colleagues. I heard an example of kind of the issues that we are talking about today from one of our other colleagues, because I think it is so important to point out that we really are not talking about cutting anything.

We simply are talking about slowing the growth of government in the future. One of our colleagues that shared an example, I think, resonates and is identifiable to all the people in this country. The example goes something like this:

Mr. Speaker, imagine that you have a child, let us say your daughter, who mows the lawn and does a great job. Let us say for the last year, you have paid your daughter a $10-a-week allowance for mowing the lawn, and she has done a good job. After that year she comes to you and says, Dad, you know, I think I need a raise. She has been doing a good job. So you say, honey, I probably might consider that raise. How much do you think you deserve? Your daughter looks at you and says, you know, well, I have been doing a good job. I think maybe I deserve $20 a week. You say, well, that is kind of generous. How about if we compromise at $15 a week?

Now, you will probably be able to determine your daughter's political future by her response. If your daughter says, well, jeez, you know, $15, that is a 50 percent raise, that is pretty generous, I think I can live with that, probably has not a great future in politics, probably should consider going into the business world. But if your daughter says, well, jeez, Dad, I was expecting $20, $15 would be a 25 percent cut, she would certainly understand the rhetoric that we hear so many times and too often here in Washington.

When we talk about reforming government, when we talk about fiscal responsibility, when we talk about a plan to reform government and attain savings, we are not talking about cuts at all. We simply are talking about doing the responsible thing, slowing the growth of government by tenths of a percent.

As an example, HUD in 2001 had 10 percent of their budget, $3.3 billion, was paid in overpayments. Now, we are talking about tenths of a percent that we might be able to find savings by rooting out fraud, waste and abuse when many Federal programs already waste a significant percentage of their budgets in overpayments, erroneous payments, and simply wasted money.

I commend the gentleman from Texas for continually reminding us that this is a responsible thing to do to find the savings, to make sure that we do not pass along huge deficits to our children that they will not be able to pay and they will look back at us and recognize that we did not do the fiscally responsible thing by simply managing the taxpayer monies better and being better stewards of the taxpayer dollar.

I thank the gentleman for letting me join him for a few seconds. Again, I commend him for his leadership.

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank the gentleman from Indiana for joining us this evening in this very, very important debate.

Mr. Speaker, I think when you hear about all the different commonsense reforms we can make and how modest they are and how this juggernaut of government spending is going to continue on, unfortunately, for years and years and years to come, again it cries out for us to take a stand and be courageous and begin the program of reform. We need to remind ourselves why we need to do this.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me give you a couple of quotes, one from Chairman Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve. He says, Mr. Speaker, ''As a Nation, we may have already made promises to coming generations of retirees that we will be unable to fulfill.'' He said that about Social Security, he said that about Medicare, important programs, important programs for seniors; but they are on automatic pilot, automatic pilot to eventually go bankrupt if we do not start the process of reforms.

Mr. Speaker, the Brookings Institute, not exactly a bastion of conservative thought in this Nation, said in a recent report, ''Expected growth in these programs, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, along with projected increases and interest on the debt and defense, will absorb all of the government's currently projected revenue within 8 years, leaving nothing for any other program.''

The General Accountability Office has said that right now we are on automatic pilot: ''We are heading to a future where we will have to double Federal taxes or cut the Federal spending by 50 percent.''

That is the future this Nation is facing, Mr. Speaker, unless we begin and enact this plan, to begin these modest reforms, so that we can begin to achieve savings for the American people.

Again, if we do not do it, this is what the Democrats have planned for us. These are the tax increases, a sea of red ink, a tsunami of red ink, a hurricane of red ink. It is all tax increases,

or it is all going to be debt, passed on to our children, because our friends on the other side of the aisle will not join us in these modest reforms.

In fact, they tell us every single day that somehow tax relief to the American people is part of the problem.

□ 1615

What they do not tell you is the massive tax increases that are going to be necessary just to pay for the government we have, not even the government that they are trying to add on top of the government programs that we already have.

Under their program, they will be bringing back the marriage penalty. They will be bringing back the death tax. The new child tax credit, say goodbye to it, accelerated depreciation and the list goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, that is not a future that the American people want, and so we are going to debate this spending.

To me, Mr. Speaker, when we see that this spending is out of control, there was a time very recently until this last Congress when Medicare paid five times as much for a wheelchair as the Veterans Administration did, five times as much, because one would competitively bid and the other would not. Well, according to our friends on that side of the aisle, somehow we cut health care for the elderly when we began to pay market prices for wheelchairs. It is absurd, Mr. Speaker.

Now we are offering reforms saying that, you know what, if you are not a citizen of the United States of America and you signed a contract not to become a ward of the State, maybe you ought to wait 7 years instead of 5 before you qualify for food stamps so that maybe we can send that money to help relieve human suffering along the gulf coast. But somehow, again in this body, notwithstanding the fact that food stamps will grow next year over this year, it is somehow called some kind of massive cut.

It is just not true, Mr. Speaker. You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts.

Mr. Speaker, what is important is that we do not let the Democrats put double taxes on our children. It is important we not allow them to increase taxes today, because the tax relief we have passed has been great for this economy. It is what is helping people. Right now, we have passed tax relief, and guess what, Mr. Speaker, we have more tax revenue.

Mr. Speaker, right now, on this chart you can see that after we passed tax relief for the American people, allowing small businesses and families to keep more of what they earn, in 2003 we have almost $1.8 trillion in revenue, in 2004 almost $1.9 trillion in revenue, and now in 2005, $2.1 trillion in revenue. Tax relief has proven to be part of the deficit solution, not part of the deficit problem.

Mr. Speaker, that may be counterintuitive to some people, but let me tell you just one story about one small business in my district back in Texas.

It is an outfit called Jacksonville Industries, employs 20 people, an aluminum and zinc die cast business. Before we passed our economic growth program that had tax relief, they were getting ready to have to lay off two of the individuals due to competitive pressures, but because of tax relief, Mr. Speaker, they were able to go out and invest in new machinery that made them more efficient. Instead of having to lay off two people, Mr. Speaker, they hired three new people.

That is five people that could have been on welfare, five people that could have been on food stamps. That is five people who could have been on unemployment, but instead, Mr. Speaker, it was five people who had good jobs with a future, who had their own housing program, their own nutritional program, their own education program called a job.

So, to listen to our friends on the other side of the aisle, they would say somehow that is a cut. It is not, Mr. Speaker. It is about freedom and opportunity, and that is what helps the poor.

STONEWALLING CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me thank my friend and colleague for allowing me to take this 5-minute special order before his 1 hour. I will be brief, but I rise for an issue of severe concern to me, Mr. Speaker.

As someone who has spent 19 years working on defense and security issues in this Congress and currently serves as the vice chairman of the Armed Services and Homeland Security Committees, I have to report to my colleagues continuing efforts to try to find out what happened before 9/11 and, unfortunately, have to report that we are being stonewalled. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I cannot use any other term but the appearance of a cover-up.

Just a few moments ago, I questioned one of the cochairs of the 9/11 Commission, Lee Hamilton, why the Commission has not yet responded to a letter that I sent to them on August 10 of this year, which I will enter into the RECORD at this point.

AUGUST 10, 2005.

Hon. THOMAS H. KEAN, Chairman,
Hon. LEE H. HAMILTON, Vice Chairman,
9/11 Public Discourse Project, One DuPont Circle, NW., Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN KEAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN HAMILTON: I am contacting you to discuss an important issue that concerns the terrible events of September 11, 2001, and our country's efforts to ensure that such a calamity is never again allowed to occur. Your bipartisan work on The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States shed light on much that was unclear in the minds of the American people regarding what happened that fateful day, however there appears to be more to the story than the public has been told. I bring this before you because of my respect for you both, and for the 9–11 Commission's service to America.

Almost seven years ago, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 established the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, otherwise known as the Gilmore Commission. The Gilmore Commission reached many of the same conclusions as your panel, and in December of 2000 called for the creation of a ''National Office for Combating Terrorism.'' I mention this because prior to 9/11, Congress was aware of many of the institutional obstacles to preventing a terrorist attack, and was actively attempting to address them. I know this because I authored the language establishing the Gilmore Commission.

In the 1990's, as chairman of the congressional subcommittee that oversaw research and development for the Department of Defense, I paid special attention to the activities of the Army's Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) at Ft. Belvoir. During that time, I led a bipartisan delegation of Members of Congress to Vienna, Austria to meet with members of the Russian parliament, or Duma. Before leaving, I received a brief from the CIA on a Serbian individual that would be attending the meeting. The CIA provided me with a single paragraph of information. On the other hand, representatives of LIWA gave me five pages of far more in-depth analysis. This was cause for concern, but my debriefing with the CIA and FBI following the trip was cause for outright alarm: neither had ever heard of LIWA or the data mining capability it possessed.

As a result of experiences such as these, I introduced language into three successive Defense Authorization bills calling for the creation of an intelligence fusion center which I called NOAH, or National Operations and Analysis Hub. The NOAH concept is certainly familiar now, and is one of several recommendations made by your commission that has a basis in earlier acts of Congress. Despite my repeated efforts to establish NOAH, the CIA insisted that it would not be practical. Fortunately, this bureaucratic intransigence was overcome when Congress and President Bush acted in 2003 to create the Terrorism Threat Integration Center (now the National Counterterrorism Center). Unfortunately, it took the deaths of 3,000 people to bring us to the point where we could make this happen. Now, I am confident that under the able leadership of John Negroponte, the days of toleration for intelligence agencies that refuse to share information with each other are behind us.

The 9–11 Commission produced a book-length account of its findings, that the American people might educate themselves on the challenges facing our national effort to resist and defeat terrorism. Though under different circumstances, I eventually decided to do the same. I recently published a book critical of our intelligence agencies because even after 9/11, they were not getting the message. After failing to win the bureaucratic battle inside the Beltway, I decided to take my case to the American people.

In recent years, a reliable source that I refer to as ''Ali'' began providing me with detailed inside information on Iran's role in supporting terror and undermining the United States' global effort to eradicate it. I have forwarded literally hundreds of pages of information from Ali to the CIA, FBI, and DIA, as well as the appropriate congressional oversight committees. The response from our intelligence agencies has been

underwhelming, to put it mildly. Worse, I have documented occasions where the CIA has outright lied to me. While the mid-level bureaucrats at Langley may not be interested in what I have to say, their new boss is. Porter Goss has all of the information I have gathered, and I know he is ready to do what it takes to challenge the circle-the-wagons culture of the CIA. And Pete Hoekstra, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, is energized as well. Director Goss and Chairman Hoekstra are both outstanding leaders that know each other well from their work together in the House of Representatives, and I will continue to strongly support their efforts at reform.

All of this background leads to the reason I am writing to you today. Yesterday the national news media began in-depth coverage of a story that is not new. In fact, I have been talking about it for some time. From 1998 to 2001, Army Intelligence and Special Operations Command spearheaded an effort called Able Danger that was intended to map out al Qaeda. According to individuals that were part of the project, Able Danger identified Mohammed Atta as a terrorist threat before 9/11. Team members believed that the Atta cell in Brooklyn should be subject to closer scrutiny, but somewhere along the food chain of Administration bureaucrats and lawyers, a decision was made in late 2000 against passing the information to the FBI. These details are understandably of great interest to the American people, thus the recent media frenzy. However I have spoken on this topic for some time, in the House Armed Services and Homeland Security Committees, on the floor of the House on June 27, 2005, and at various speaking engagements.

The impetus for this letter is my extreme disappointment in the recent, and false, claim of the 9–11 Commission staff that the Commission was never given access to any information on Able Danger. The 9–11 Commission staff received not one but two briefings on Able Danger from former team members, yet did not pursue the matter. Furthermore, commissioners never returned calls from a defense intelligence official that had made contact with them to discuss this issue as a follow on to a previous meeting.

In retrospect, it appears that my own suggestions to the Commission might have directed investigators in the direction of Able Danger, had they been heeded. I personally reached out to members of the Commission several times with information on the need for a national collaborative capability, of which Able Danger was a prototype. In the context of those discussions, I referenced LIWA and the work it had been doing prior to 9/11. My chief of staff physically handed a package containing this information to one of the commissioners at your Commission's appearance on April 13, 2004 in the Hart Senate Office Building. I have spoken with Governor Kean by phone on this subject, and my office delivered a package with this information to the 9–11 Commission staff via courier. When the Commission briefed Congress with their findings on July 22, 2004, I asked the very first question in exasperation: ''Why didn't you let Members of Congress who were involved in these issues testify before, or meet with, the Commission?''

The 9–11 Commission took a very high-profile role in critiquing intelligence agencies that refused to listen to outside information. The commissioners very publicly expressed their disapproval of agencies and departments that would not entertain ideas that did not originate in-house. Therefore it is no small irony that the Commission would in the end prove to be guilty of the very same offense when information of potentially critical importance was brought to its attention. The Commission's refusal to investigate Able Danger after being notified of its existence, and its recent efforts to feign ignorance of the project while blaming others for supposedly withholding information on it, brings shame on the commissioners, and is evocative of the worst tendencies in the federal government that the Commission worked to expose.

Questions remain to be answered. The first: What lawyers in the Department of Defense made the decision in late 2000 not to pass the information from Able Danger to the FBI? And second: Why did the 9–11 Commission staff not find it necessary to pass this information to the Commissioners, and why did the 9–11 Commission staff not request full documentation of Able Danger from the team member that volunteered the information?

Answering these questions is the work of the commissioners now, and fear of tarnishing the Commission's legacy cannot be allowed to override the truth. The American people are counting on you not to ''go native'' by succumbing to the very temptations your Commission was assembled to indict. In the meantime, I have shared all that I know on this topic with the congressional committee chairmen that have oversight over the Department of Defense, the CIA, the FBI, and the rest of our intelligence gathering and analyzing agencies. You can rest assured that Congress will share your interest in how it is that this critical information is only now seeing the light of day.

Sincerely,

CURT WELDON,
Member of Congress.

This letter asks significant questions about a Top Secret intelligence unit in the military that identified Mohammed Atta and three associates in a Brooklyn cell 1 year before 9/11.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are still in the military, and they have offered to testify publicly, but this administration is gagging them. This administration is not allowing these military officers to speak, and in fact, the Defense Intelligence Agency is in the midst of destroying the career of a 23-year Bronze Star recipient, a lieutenant colonel in the Army, for doing one thing, for telling the truth.

Mr. Speaker, there are bureaucrats in this administration, in the previous administration who do not want the story of Able Danger to come forward. Even though this secret intelligence unit was ordered by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, carried out by Special Forces Command, and we now know had information 2 days before the attack on the *Cole* that could have prevented 17 sailors from losing their lives; and in January of 2000, identified Mohammed Atta and, in September of 2000, tried to transfer that information to the FBI on three occasions.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the 9/11 Commission did not mention Able Danger at all. When they were asked about it by the New York Times in August of this year, they said, Well, it was historically insignificant.

Mr. Speaker, Louis Freeh, the FBI Director during the time of 9/11, was interviewed on national news by Tim Russert on ''Meet the Press'' 2 weeks ago, and when he was asked about his role in the information on 9/11, he said, Well, you know, if we would have had the information from the Able Danger team, and I quote, ''that is the kind of tactical intelligence that would have made a difference in stopping the hijacking.'' Louis Freeh says it could have stopped the hijacking, and the 9/11 Commission now says it is historically insignificant.

Mr. Speaker, there is something wrong in the Beltway. Tomorrow, at 12:30 in the House gallery, I will unveil additional new information on Able Danger. I will unveil an enhanced set of investigations because, Mr. Speaker, in the end, the families of the 3,000 victims, the families of the 17 sailors, the people in this country deserve to know the truth.

What happened before 9/11? Why is information being held in secret? Why are military officers being gagged? Why can the truth not be told?

Mr. Speaker, we must in this body demand the truth publicly.

AMERICAN WORKERS PENSION SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, millions of Americans are worried sick about their retirement nest eggs, and they are demanding decisive action by Congress. In just the last 2 weeks, two national publications have featured cover stories on the peril America's workers and retirees are facing.

On October 31 of this year, the issue of Time magazine has a stinging anthology of missteps and foibles of the Congress in the regulation of private pension plans. The cover story that is pictured here on this cover of Time magazine, called, ''The Great Retirement Rip-off—Millions of Americans who think they will retire with benefits are in for a nasty surprise—how corporations are picking people's pockets—with the help of Congress.''

That is the status of the American workers' pension system today. It is a system that is in peril, and it continues to be in peril because of the lack of action by this Congress.

For 3 years, we have been warning the President and this Congress that we must take decisive action to strengthen unfunded pension plans. Back in July of 2002, I wrote Secretary O'Neill and Secretary Chao, urging them to take action after private pension underfunding quadrupled $25 billion to $111 billion.

I wrote to them that ''The implications of such massive shortfall in pension funds are staggering, for pensioners, taxpayers and for private companies themselves. As part of your agency's statutory duties, as overseers of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, it is incumbent upon you,'' Mr. and Mrs. Secretary, ''to ensure that private pension plans continue to

be properly and adequately funded, and that the economic security of employees and taxpayers is no further endangered.''

What do you think happened since I wrote that letter back in July of 2002? Private pension plans' underfunding has quadrupled again to nearly $450 billion. The pension plans of hard-working men and women in this country, the pension plans that they are basing their retirement plans on, the pension plans that they are relying on for the future care of their spouses and other members of their family are underfunded by $450 billion.

The deficit at the PBGC, the agency that is supposed to guarantee these pensions should these companies go out of business, should these pensions be put into default, they are, in fact, now at greater risk of having to pay out billions of dollars to make up the shortfall. In fact, they are at risk of whether or not the PBGC can continue, given the amount of shortfall that exists in America's pension plans.

Since we wrote the Secretaries back then and since the quadrupling of the underfunding, hundreds of thousands of employees at U.S. Airways and United have lost billions of dollars in promised benefits. What has this Congress done about this? Absolutely nothing.

It took years for the Bush administration to get a reform plan up to the Congress, and it has not lifted a finger to push for the passage of that plan. Where is the leadership on behalf of America's working families? Where is the sense of urgency to protect billions of dollars in promised retirement benefits that are now threatened?

After years of costly delay, finally the House and Senate committees have passed legislation out of committee, but there is an ugly truth about the bills that many of you do not know about. When the Members of Congress voted on these bills, they were not given the facts about what these bills really do: What is the impact of these bills on the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation; what is the impact on the companies who we were raising the premiums for; what is the impact on the taxpayers; and what is the impact on America's workers and their retirement plans.

When we voted on one of these so-called pension bills last spring, the committee Democrats voted ''present'' because we had no information on the legislation's impact. A few weeks ago, several weeks after the committee voted, we asked the PBGC and CBO what, in fact, are the real impacts? What they have told us is that it has made the situation worse, that the bill that was passed in the committee actually hastens the pension crisis.

Here is what the Congressional Budget Office wrote us in October of this year: ''H.R. 2830,'' the pension bill, ''would increase PBGC's 10-year net costs by $9 billion, or about 14 percent, compared with what it would be under current policy.'' So we made the problem for the guaranty corporation worse with this bill.

The PBGC, that guaranty corporation, also analyzed itself, and it said that using a model that contains the hundreds of plans found in the guaranty corporation, the committee-passed bill would add billions more to the PBGC's deficit than under current law.

Not only does this bill make the problems worse with respect to underfunding, it also fails in many other respects. Most significantly, the bill does not stop companies like United Airlines from dumping billions of unwanted pension debt onto the guaranty corporation.

Delta and Northwest now have watched this Congress, they have watched United; and I believe that we can expect that they will follow suit, and we will end up with those pensions. They watched United dump $10 billion onto the public taxpayers, and the Congress did not lift a finger. Now Delta and Northwest are in bankruptcy and very well could dump their pensions into the guaranty corporation and onto the backs of the taxpayers.

According to the guaranty corporation, Delta Airlines is underfunded by $10.6 billion. The PBGC loss would be about $8.4 billion and the employees and retirees would lose $2.2 billion in promised benefits.

□ 1630

Northwest Airlines is $5.7 billion underfunded, and the employee loss would even be greater there. Those employees would lose about $2.9 billion in pension benefits that they have planned on, that they are expecting, and that they have built their retirement on. And now, more dominoes may be falling. Delphi Auto Parts has filed for bankruptcy, the largest such filing in the history of the automobile industry. According to the PBGC, the Delphi claim on the taxpayer-funded corporation would be about $4.1 billion. The hit on employees, over $10 billion in uninsured losses would be the largest ever. That tops the $6 billion in worker losses that the PBGC estimated occurred over its four previous largest pension plan terminations.

What does this all add up to? This all adds up to the fact that there is bad news for American workers who are relying on their employer to help them provide for their pension plans, for their retirements. We see this story in Time magazine, the cover story telling us how Americans are in for a very nasty surprise when it comes time to retire in the next few years for many of the baby boomers. Then we see a week later in The New York Times magazine: ''We Regret to Inform You That You No Longer Have a Pension.''

That is the message that is being sent to millions of Americans, millions of Americans who in many instances have no way to recover those resources for their retirement because of their age. They are 50, they are 55, they are 60 years old. They have no way to recover this. They could not work enough overtime. They could not work enough Saturdays and Sundays. They could not work enough holidays to get that pension back.

What is the Congress doing? The Congress is doing nothing. In fact, the tragedy of the Time magazine story is that it shows that Congress has been a handmaiden in allowing corporations to game the system, allowing corporations to use the pension plan for the convenience, the profit, and the personal rewards of board members, shareholders, and the CEOs of the company. They all use the pension plan and manipulate the pension plan for their benefit. But the workers are left out of that equation.

Even this morning, in The New York Times, we are told that the Accounting Standards Board is now looking at taking action because of this manipulation of workers' pensions. They talk about how, I believe it was the Lucent Corporation, where the CEO was given a $4 million bonus for doing such a great job, on top of a $1.5 million salary, and then was given another bonus because the profits of the corporation were up and the revenues were up. The only problem was that the CEO had been in the process of manipulating the pension plan to make it look like the profits of Lucent were up.

Of course, the story of Lucent is well-known. The profits were phantom. They were not there, and they have tumbled. That same CEO has now been fired, probably given a severance package, but nobody said a word while they were manipulating the pension plan.

So this goes on every day and the Congress stands by and does nothing. They do nothing to ensure that Americans will have a say in their pension plans. Imagine this, this company had $10 billion, $12 billion of workers' money, their retirement; yet those workers had no say in how that company would use that pension plan. That is not just Lucent; that is true of almost every other pension plan in this country. That is what we saw with Enron. That is what we see with Lucent. That is what we see with company after company that uses the plan for the convenience of the company to mislead shareholders, to mislead investors, and to mislead Wall Street.

Hopefully, hopefully in the next few weeks, the Accounting Standards Board will step up to the plate here and hit one out for the American public and give the American public some say in the money that they have earned, people who have earned these pensions over 15 years, over 20 years; these people who gave up salary so they would have a better retirement plan. They gave up health care so they would have a better retirement plan. They produced this pension plan, and now it is treated as if it is only the personal property of the executive board of the company, the corporation, and the personal property of the CEO. And if

things go bad, they run to the taxpayers to bail them out, but the workers lose over half of all of their pensions. That is what happened to the people at United Airlines. That is what is going to happen to the people at Delphi, and that is what is going to happen to so many pensioners.

Now, we could not get the Republican Congress to hold a hearing on this problem to take a look at United Airlines, so we had to resort to an e-hearing. We had to go out on the Internet and ask the employees of United to tell us what this meant to them, and we got thousands of responses from people, thousands of responses from people about what this pension meant to their life.

Among those thousands of responses, and among millions of so many people in this country, were people telling us about their pensions and the importance of their pensions to take care of a spouse who had serious illnesses, who had disabilities; to take care of a child who was disabled; to take care of a child who had a serious illness, and now they were going to lose that ability because United was cutting their pensions in half, and the PBGC Board would not be able to take care of them. So very often these people talked about their plans for their retirement that simply evaporated the day United callously threw their plans into bankruptcy.

One of the letters we see was from a spouse of a captain at United. She wrote: ''Dear Congressman Miller, my name is Ellen Saracini. My husband, Captain Victor J. Saracini, was the captain of United Flight 175 that struck the south tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, at 9:03 a.m. While no one could have imagined the events of that infamous day, neither could Victor have imagined what would be happening to his wife and two daughters.

''I am writing this letter to voice to you what has been taken away from Victor and his family. If you only knew my husband, you would know he was a true family man, who made sure his family's future was provided for. I am currently receiving the spousal portion of Victor's pension, which is 50 percent of what he thought would be there for his family. After United took away our employee stock ownership plan, this pension is how I am supporting my two daughters and myself.

''I was given a choice to sue the airlines, the port authority, and others, or join in with the victims compensation fund set up by the government. I pledged I would not sue and proceeded with the fund. After all, this is the company Victor was so proud to work for and the same company of his United brothers and sisters. Every bit of preparation that Victor and I worked for was used against the claim. Life insurance was deducted. My full pension was deducted from the award. Now I will have a double jeopardy, as I will again lose my pension with no recourse on either side.

''I can't help but ask myself, at what point are companies allowed to take away so much from the lives of dedicated employees and their families? At what point does our government step in and stop the atrocities such as this before they are allowed to irrevocably change the lives of so many? I refuse to believe that this is the only solution that can be reached.

''The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's decision to allow United Airlines to end their pension is just wrong. If this monumental verdict moves forward, I will be faced with many hardships. Victor was a proud United pilot, husband, father, and friend, who fought a war with terrorists. Never would he have imagined that he would have to fight for his family's well-being with the very company he so proudly spread his wings for. Sincerely, Ellen Saracini.''

That letter echoes what we heard from so many across the country about their plans being shattered, about their ability to care for members of their family being shattered. And, of course, we understand that so many others would like to tell their stories, but there is no vehicle in the Congress of the United States for doing that.

One of my colleagues on the Education and Workforce Committee, Congressman TIERNEY, I see has joined us from Boston; and I would like at this point to yield to him. He has been a stalwart in this effort to try to hold the Congress accountable, to try to hold the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation accountable, and most importantly to try and hold corporations to be accountable and stop this criminal activity of the manipulation of the pension plans of their employees, the same manipulation, the same activities that are outlined in the cover story of Time magazine of October 31 of this year and then again in The New York Times magazine of October 30 of this year. And today, if you want to be current on it, you can read The New York Times business page about the continued manipulation of the pension plans for the benefit of everybody except the retirees.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for yielding to me. As you say, reading those articles is just shocking, but it is nothing new to us.

For a couple of years now, we have been following my colleague's lead as Democrats on the Education and Workforce Committee trying to get the Republicans in this body to understand the need to confront what is nothing short of a crisis. Millions of Americans are in retirement, or they are nearing retirement; and all they are experiencing now is either decreasing health benefits or decreasing pension benefits, and the total loss of one or the other in many instances. It is not fair, it is not right, and in fact it is not sound policy for this country.

For the past century, we have really had a history of gradually improving people's quality of life. Go back to 1938, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt said: ''There is still today a frontier that remains unconquered, an America unclaimed. That is the great nationwide frontier of insecurity, of human want and fear. This is the frontier, the America we have set ourselves to reclaim.''

At the time that he said that, a majority of aging citizens were faced with either working until they dropped or living in poverty as they got older or as ill health set in. But Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his thirst set about doing something about it: Social Security. Eisenhower later on added disability to that, and the Johnson years saw Medicare and Medicaid. All along the way, corporate America actually helped, with Jacob Hacker constructing what they called ''structures of security.'' They guaranteed pensions, generous health care benefits, and generous life insurance.

So we had all of America working together. This was an effort where together America did better. We were protected from what FDR called ''the hazards and vicissitudes of modern industrial life.'' Together, we shielded families and we covered them from uncertainty and fear.

Now that is all settling back in. If you look around and talk to any family, as my colleague has done, talk to families and again that uncertainty and that fear of the future is there for them. Corporate America no longer seems to want to participate. They are taking away health benefits; they are taking away pensions. They do not want to honor the pensions. And my colleague and I both know that people worked for those pensions. It was not something that was just given to them. They gave up extra salary on the promise that the company would set aside that money to build a pension fund or a health care fund for their retirement, for the future. They earned those benefits. They struck a bargain, and now that bargain is being broken.

We are watching as company after company cut back on health benefits, jettison pension obligations, and usually through the side door of bankruptcy. The gentleman mentioned what happened with United. They are not just going to toss them out. They go into a bankruptcy court, and they convince the court that they have to cut loose on those pension funds in order to regroup and come back out of bankruptcy at some point as a healthy company.

But the CEOs do not get hurt. The CEOs and other management people walk out with golden parachutes worth millions of dollars, leaving very little for the people that put their blood and sweat into building that company in the first place and building the value of that stock. We hear the obligatory regrets, we see the handwringing, and we are told there was nothing else to be done.

But we know that is not the case. Most did not exhaust all the avenues to finance a continuation of those pension funds, and my colleague pointed out a number of occasions like that. Most of these companies did not even work with the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation to look at the numerous number of financial vehicles that are out there that could have been used or at least considered to try to keep these plans healthy so that all these employees could have gotten more than they got when they were brought up at the bankruptcy and ignominiously dropped off and dumped.

Shareholders, new shareholders and new owners come out of bankruptcy and find a profitable company and make millions. But people who lost their pensions end up on the short end of it and their livelihoods are getting killed in this process. Companies did not honor their promises. They did not set enough funds aside. They used tricky accounting, unscrupulously applied by management, management obviously more involved with the bottom line and sometimes their own benefits and their own retirement programs than they were with the human needs of all those people that worked so hard to make that company successful.

Whole industries are now parroting what United did. We are watching the airline industry one after the other marching into the bankruptcy courts and saying, hey, this is not so bad. We can dump off our obligation and hurt all these employees, but we might save the company against other creditors. Under this Republican leadership in Congress, we have done nothing about that. We really have not looked at it and have not tried to deal with this problem. We have done way too little.

We have done a little. After 2 years of badgering from the Democratic side of the aisle, we are looking to try to shore up that Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, increasing the fees somewhat, making it more expensive to withdraw. But it is late, and it may or may not be all we need to do to make sure that that works. We have to tighten the rules to make sure we have the proper valuing system going on and to discourage people from dumping the funds.

We also have to set some parity. Maybe the surest way to make sure people get treated fairly is a bill my colleague has proposed to make sure that CEOs and other executives do not get treated much, much better than the employees; that they do not get to dump the employees off while saving themselves. If we had parity, where what is good for the goose is good for the gander, we would not be watching that happen.

We have to create more transparency. This is anther issue we have brought up time and time again. We ought to know ahead of time what the true status of these funds is. It is not enough to, well, say we cannot tell the public because sometimes on paper it looks worse than it is and they will panic. We are talking about adults here. We are talking about people trying to plan their future. And if we let them know what state that pension is in early enough in time, we can get the company and apply enough pressure to maybe correct that situation. That is good for all stakeholders, employees, shareholders, customers, and everybody right down the line.

We should require that the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and companies try to work these things out before they go to bankruptcy. It ought to be a requirement that they use every single measure available and consider all alternatives and only go in as a last resort.

□ 1645

And we had better find a way to protect workers' pensions if they do go into bankruptcy. What is the explanation why people who have invested over the course of 15, 20, 30 years of work do not have their rights protected as a creditor, yet someone who might have given a loan to the company in the last 6 months gets credited as a preferred creditor and gets supported.

Whose rights are more important and who has a better claim to the assets of that company than the employees who made it what it is?

Finally, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation was not designed to have whole industries fall apart. It was designed that if an occasional company went under, it would be able to shore up and at least give those employees some portion of their retirement benefits so they would not lose everything. But now what we are seeing is other people following the lead of United, whether it is Delphi, United, other airlines, we stand the prospect of having whole industries jumping on the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation as an insurer and they are totally underfunded for that kind of a situation.

We need to look at that and say, is there something that we should set up, another source of funds, whether it is a ticket fee or something else, something that we can set aside so that industry going down does not take on the whole Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and all corporations and put all those employees at risk.

More broadly, I think we need some leadership here in Congress on this issue. If corporations are not going to do anything about it, what are we going to do? What are we going to put in place for structures of security for the American people? What is our plan to make sure that something is there for people?

People do not save enough. History shows us that. If corporations are going to take their money over a number of years and not hold their promise, what are we going to do as a society to make sure there is some security for people when they retire and can no longer work because of their age or because of their health?

We need 21st century structures of security here. Democrats have been talking about this. We want to do something about it. We have ideas and we are open to a lot of other ideas. We cannot get the conversation started. We are going to keep at it.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman points out that this raid is taking place on pensions. The President, in the middle of the Enron debacle said what is good from the captain is good for the crew, and then we have heard nothing from the President again. The President has done nothing to shore up the existing system that is under threat. And in the middle of that, what does the President do? He attacks the Social Security plan, which is the single largest source of pension benefits for these very same people.

So while he lets the corporations dump pension benefits into bankruptcy, lets corporations dump them into the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, which costs the pensioners billions and billions in dollars of pension benefits, then at the same time he conducts a raid on Social Security by trying to create some private accounts that adds trillions of dollars in new debt to Social Security.

So now what you have is the poor American worker, whether it is their private savings, whether it is their employer pension plan or Social Security, it is all under threat. It is all under threat. The tragedy is that, given what is going on in the private sector with the manipulation of pension plans, with the uncertainty about the future of pension plans, with corporations fully prepared to just throw them into bankruptcy, Social Security is emerging as the most secure retirement system in the Nation. There is not a single corporation, not Delphi, not General Motors, not AT&T, not Lucent, not Kodak, not Microsoft, that can look you in the eye and tell you, 75 years from now 85 percent of your benefits will be there and they will be there like clockwork. Social Security can, and that is the one they have targeted for extinction.

Their proposal is to leave the worker in this country, the employee who has struggled for the success of the companies that they work for, to leave them with nowhere to turn. All you have to do is just go out into any public gathering and you will start to get feedback from people who are telling you about how nervous they are about their retirement benefits and how much they have counted on them, and now they do not know if they are going to be there or not. They are uncertain and they have no ability to plan.

We have a plan, and that plan is, just as we did with employer and employee contributions to pension plans, just as we did to employer and employee contributions to Social Security, the idea is if we work together as a society, we can bond together and provide these resources so people will have decent retirements.

Because we went through many generations in this country where people's retirement was only about poverty. But because of Social Security, because of Medicare, we have lifted millions and millions of Americans out of poverty to have a decent retirement plan. They have contributed with their personal savings and their employers have contributed with their employee pension plans. Now all of that appears to be at risk.

This Congress must step in and start to deal with this problem because the economic livelihood of millions of American families and individuals is at stake here and the system we have now was designed when few companies went out of business.

Today, these companies understand that you simply take all of your liabilities, you dump them on the taxpayer, and this is what Bethlehem Steel did, you get rid of those liabilities, and then the company continues on. We absorbed billions of dollars in liability from the steelworkers. Mr. Ross got all of the steel companies together, and then he sold them to Mitel, the Indian steel company, and they are off and running as part of one of the largest steel companies in the world. Thank you, American taxpayer, and thank you the steelworkers who lost a big chunk of their pension plans. They subsidized that activity.

Mr. Speaker, that cannot be allowed to continue. I thank the gentleman for joining me here today.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, there are simple things that we should do just to get started. If we change the default on 401(k) plans so they default into them as opposed to they have to take an affirmative action in order to sign up for them, all of the reports show that would increase savings in this country or at least put a hedge on that.

If we allowed people to bifurcate their tax returns, so instead of one check sent back or put towards next year's taxes, workers could actually have some set aside for a 401(k), reports show it would increase savings.

We cannot get our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join us in doing a simple first step. This is a serious matter. They talk about the ownership policy of the President. But basically it is every man, woman and child for themselves. They are not going to tax the estates of dead people, not going to tax dividends, but are going to tax every ounce of work that causes sweat on your brow, not have companies live up to their promises with respect to your pensions, let companies take away the health care that they promised when you retire.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are about much, much more. This is a country that has always had a mixed economy. This is a country that has always relied on having a free market and that was always invigorated by a rigorous public square, public policy that worked for everybody; and corporations and individuals and government leaders worked together to find solutions.

We are ready to do that. If the other side does not want to do that, then step aside and let us go because this is a serious matter for families across the country. They are rightfully worried about this.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. The fact of the matter is, as pointed out in these articles, people no longer having pensions or people being in for a nasty surprise, the fact of the matter is, for 5 years the Bush administration, the Republican Congress, have simply stood back as the American middle class standard of living for retirees is dismantled, it is threatened, is devastated, however Members want to describe it. That is what they have done.

They have suggested this is okay because you can ask Secretary Chao until the cows come home anything about it, she cannot answer a single question, expresses no concern, could provide no information about the pension bill. The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation refused to provide us the information before we voted. After we voted, they said, You made the problem worse. And from the Congressional Budget Office, You made the problem worse.

So I guess that the policy of the Republican Congress and the Bush administration is that millions of Americans will lose their hold on the middle class the moment they retire. The moment they retire, they will lose their hold.

We have tried to encourage a younger generation to save, to provide for their retirement. We cannot get a hearing on things that would dramatically change, if not these retirees' livelihoods, it would certainly change the livelihood for younger workers in this country. It is a sad day that we do not do this.

Tragically, there are going to be millions more cover stories like this as millions of Americans lose access to the retirement they were planning for for the care of themselves, their families, and their children.

NATURAL GAS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about what I think is really the issue of the day, and that is energy. Energy runs this country. Energy is what we use to get to work. Energy is what we use to run our homes. Energy is what we use to manufacture and process things.

Yes, it all started 5 miles from where I live many years ago when Drake Well discovered oil. That is about 150 years ago. Energy then became the major component of the industrial revolution in this country and the world, and oil was king. Oil still plays a major role. I am not so sure it is king, but Drake Well was the beginning.

Then we got into the World War I and World War II era, and coal was king. America is probably the Saudi Arabia of coal. We have coal in the West and coal in the East. The eastern part of the country furnished both soft and hard coal that fueled the Industrial Revolution.

In recent years, we have had a shift from coal to natural gas. Now natural gas has always played a role. The major share of American homes are heated with natural gas. The majority of small businesses are heated with natural gas. Natural gas plays a huge role in manufacturing. I think that is the one that is least understood.

This morning we had a hearing held by a group of American employers who employ millions of Americans. It was the American Chemical Association, American Forest and Paper Products Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, and 13 other agencies, Agriculture Energy Alliance, American Plastics Council. It goes on and on, rubber manufacturers, Fertilizer Institute. All of these people today had one message for Congress: Solve the natural gas problem that is forcing us out of business.

The use of natural gas has been skyrocketing. I can show Members a chart that shows it. The red is the growing use of natural gas. We are right about at this point here, and it is only going to get worse because we have expanded the use of natural gas in this country, particularly for the generation of electricity. One-fourth of our natural gas now generates electricity, and that figure continues to grow.

We now have an inadequate supply because as we have simultaneously increased the use of natural gas, we simultaneously locked up the major areas of this country that are rich in natural gas.

We only have about 3 percent of the world's oil at our access, and we import about 60 percent of our oil. That is a path we cannot follow. We need to be veering from the use of oil everywhere we can because it is not that we are buying it from friends at a fair price.

Just a few years ago, natural gas was less than $2 a thousand and oil was $10 a barrel. That went on for decades and that prevented other types of energy from competing because those prices were so cheap that we just became complacent as a country, not realizing that somewhere down the road, the price of these energy fuels could really be harmful to this country. Well, we are there today.

We recently passed an energy bill that does a lot of things for the future. It does a lot of things for wind and solar and biomass and ethanol and the list goes on and on, hydrogen fuel cells, but they are all long term. There are incentives in that bill for promoting it.

□ 1700

But it did little to promote natural gas. There were a couple of incentives for deep drilling, but in my view, natural gas is the crisis of the day.

We have heard an awful lot on television about gasoline prices. Every newscast for weeks talked about the highest gasoline prices in history, and at one point after Katrina we were over $3, $3.25, unheard-of prices, and they have settled down now about a buck now. They are $2-something or $2.30 or $2.25, depending on where one lives, but they had come back down.

At one point gasoline prices had doubled over a 5-year period, and that was all the news. But at the same time natural gas prices had increased 700 percent. That is seven times, and there was just little discussion of that.

There has been little warning for the American public that heating their homes was going to be so expensive this year. There was little warning to our businesses who use natural gas as heat, who use it to melt, smelt, bend products, use it as an ingredient to making products.

I think one of the things that was pointed out today was that 96 percent of things produced in some way use natural gas as an ingredient or as a heat to make them. So it is entwined in our whole manufacturing and production base that it really is the fuel that depends on where America goes. And the tragedy of natural gas prices when they have increased 700 percent is, we are the only country where that has happened.

We are in a competitive world. We compete with the whole world in this global economy. And when we paid $65 and almost $70 for oil, all our competitors, all of the rest of the world, paid that high price. So it was painful, but it was equally painful to our competitors.

Now, in natural gas, that is not the case. In natural gas, while we were paying $14.50, now about $11.50 or $12, but when we were paying $14.50, we were the only country in the world paying that. Canada was less. In Europe it is about half of what we pay for natural gas. And our big competitors like China, Japan, Taiwan, who manufacture a lot of products we buy in our stores, they are buying natural gas for a third of what we do. The rest of the world it is less than $2, and countries like North Africa and Russia are less than $1.

So there is a huge cost differential for manufacturers and processors and people heating their homes in this country than the rest of the world, and that puts us at a huge disadvantage. And currently our schools and our hospitals and our YMCAs and YWCAs and our churches and colleges and universities and small businesses are buying gas at twice the price they paid last year, and most of them are purchasing on contract because they saved money on a contract basis in years in the past, but now it is costing them.

And big producers, industries that are threatened, are the ones that met here today and talked to Congress saying, please do something to open up the supply of natural gas because the only thing that will make a difference on price is supply. So the steel companies and the aluminum countries and the brass makers and the petrochemical and the polymers and the plastics and the fertilizers, they all were pleading with Congress today in their hearing to open up supply, give us the chance to get fair prices for natural gas so we can compete.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that we must deal with. If Congress does not step up to the plate and open up supply of natural gas, we will say good-bye to a million or more of the best manufacturing and processing jobs left in America.

We have lost a lot of jobs in America to cheap labor and for lack of modern technology. But this is a crisis caused by government, caused by Congress, caused by the last three administrations who had Presidential moratoriums on natural gas production on the Outer Continental Shelf, and locked up millions of acres in the West also that are rich areas for natural gas and, at the same time, urged those who were producing electricity from coal to switch to natural gas.

Florida is one of the States that have switched, and now 75 to 80 percent of their electricity is produced by natural gas. California is another big coastal State that is a huge consumer of natural gas. And yet both of those States have been fighting tooth and nail that we must not open up the Outer Continental Shelf for production. They claim that it will destroy their beaches, it will destroy their tourism.

Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence to prove that. There just absolutely is no evidence. I have asked at every forum for months, Show me a natural gas production well that has polluted a beach.

Now, I believe that we should do it offshore far enough that it is not visible, so it is not something that people have to look at. And I love to go to the beaches. I love the beaches as much as anybody, and I want them to be clean and pristine and nice and full of fish. And the proof is that in the parts of the ocean where we produce both gas and oil, fishing is very good. It has not been a detriment to aquatic life. In fact, the least imprint by those who know this issue best, and I am not speaking about big companies, I am speaking about scientists who know this issue best, the least imprint for energy production is when they get 20 miles offshore. Nobody sees it. Nobody knows it is there. The distribution lines are all underground.

One might say, how can I prove that? Well, it is interesting. Canada is known as a very green, sensitive country. They produce offshore on both coasts. Great Britain, Denmark, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Sweden, all environmentally sensitive countries who produce huge amounts of natural gas and oil on their Outer Continental Shelves.

What is the Outer Continental Shelf? The Outer Continental Shelf is the first 200 miles offshore. The first 3 miles are controlled by the States under current law, and the next 197 miles are controlled by the Federal Government.

Some years ago, the Congress, about 25 years ago, started passing language in every Interior bill that said the Department of Interior could not spend dollars to lease land for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf. So that has effectively locked it up. And then we have had three Presidents in a row who have a Presidential moratorium that we could not lease out land for production on the Outer Continental Shelf.

So here where, in the land of plenty with natural gas to spare, we currently produce 84 percent of our natural gas, we import 14 percent from Canada, and we import 2 percent in liquefied natural gas, which can come from anywhere in the world. It is a very difficult process. We have to have the largest ships known to man. We have to have very controversial ports where we bring it and turn it back into gas after we have liquefied it.

And I am not saying that is inappropriate, but it is not the answer to the looming shortage of natural gas that is going to be around for the next 15 to 20 years because every projection I have looked at shows the need for natural gas growing much faster than the ability to produce it.

We are actually drilling twice as many oil wells today as we historically did, and yet we are not producing a lot more natural gas. And the reason for that is, for the bulk of it, we are producing most of those wells in old, tired fields that we have been producing out of for decades and the bloom is off. The flush wells are gone, and the wells we drill do not last as long and have not held up. So as we continue to add and add wells to production, we are just not gaining. We are just not closing the gap. We are increasing the shortfall. And we realize that just in the short span of time we went from gas that was less than $2 to just a couple of weeks ago we had gas at $14.50, prices the industry never dreamed possible.

We had had the highest gas prices this summer. They were running $6.50 and $7 and then $7 and $8 and were edging up towards $9, and everybody was just stunned because last year the average price in the summer was $5.30. The year before that was about $4.50. The year before that they were about 3-something.

This was summer prices when gas was the cheapest, and that is when we normally put about 20 percent of our gas underground in storage caverns so that we have enough supply in the winter when it gets very cold and we use huge amounts of natural gas, one, to run our industries, and, two, to heat our homes and our churches and our businesses.

Well, the summer prices have shown us a tremendous increase, from less than $2 to 3-something, to 4-something to 5-something, and then this year we

were running at $7, $8, and sometimes more than $8 when Katrina hit. And then we went up to $14; we doubled. It shows us the sensitivity.

A lot of people ask, how do we bring prices down? We increase supply. When we increase supply, the market comes down. But we cannot increase supply if we do not open up drilling. And it is interesting that some people just have a real problem with the ''drill'' word, but a gas well is not something to fear. It is a 6-inch hole in the ground with a steel pipe. They cement the bottom. They cement the top, and they let gas out. Gas comes out under its own pressure into a collection system where it is cleaned and impurities are taken out; and then it comes to our homes, and we just turn on our gas burner and cook our meals. We turn on the gas burner and heat our homes. Industry uses it in so many ways.

I vividly remember in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I was a retail supermarket operator, and we had high gas prices then, high oil prices then, and we had three extremely cold winters, the coldest we had had on record for a long time. And during that period of time, in the retail supermarket, it was always difficult to make a profit in January and February and sometimes March. Then when warm weather came and winter costs left, we then came back to where we made a profit.

Well, I remember those years because people spent so much money to travel because of oil prices being high and spent so much to heat their homes because of gas prices that by spring they had backed up and owed their gas company and owed energy bills, and they were clear into April, May, and almost June before they had those paid off to where they were shopping normally.

And 60-some percent of the economy in this country is people shopping. About 60 percent of Americans spend every dollar they make from payday to payday, and when they spend a huge amount more for travel, like they have this year, and this winter they will spend a lot more than usual, in some places double, for heating their homes, there is going to be a lot less spendable income.

The poorest among us, the young couples and the seniors among us who are trying to stay in their homes are going to be the ones who pay the severe price. The upper middle class will feel pain, but they will not be endangered.

I believe, with the energy prices this year, we are going to see seniors who cannot adequately heat their homes. I already hear of churches who are talking of not using the sanctuary, only meeting in the basement. That is not the kind of society I think we want, and it is not one we should have.

The current prices of natural gas are only abnormally high because Congress has failed to act. The Presidents have failed to lift the moratoriums on the Outer Continental Shelf. Eighty-five percent of our coastline, we get 40 percent of our energy in this country from just a small portion of the gulf under the States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and a little bit of Alabama. That is the only place we produce on the OCS in great quantities. There are a few places on the West Coast, but not many, that we produce a little bit of energy, that were there existing.

But the moratoriums have locked up everything. And like I said earlier, we are the only country who has done that, and it makes no sense.

Natural gas production is not a threat to our coastlines. It is not a threat to tourism. In fact, I think States like Florida and California who receive most of their electricity that has been produced by natural gas, when those long-term contracts end, they are going to have huge increases in electric costs because they make their electricity from natural gas.

And many of those big companies have long-term contracts. The long-term contracts in my district that have been coming due, people are switching from $6 gas to $14 gas. I have had companies that even had to purchase $16 gas. Those are unheard-of prices, unthought-of prices.

Monday I was at a celebration of a new lime kiln plant that is in my district, for a company, Graymont, a good company that spent $60 million to bring in a new kiln to make lime. I said to them right away, ''What energy do you use to make the lime?'' Because they have to heat it to 2,400 degrees. That is hot.

They said, ''We use coal here. We are fortunate.'' But they said, ''We have lime kiln plants that use natural gas.''

I said, ''What are you are doing there?''

They said, ''They are shut down.''

We are going to find that people who make bricks, people who dry products, people who cook products, there are going to be companies that curtail production. Some are going to stop production.

□ 1715

Why? Because they cannot pay the current natural gas prices and sell those products in a marketplace where they are competing with people in other countries where natural gas prices are a fraction of what they are here.

We have to realize we are not an island to ourselves. Unfortunately, there have been a lot of reasons besides cheap labor that companies have chosen to produce overseas in other countries. Some are the legal issues because of the multitude of lawsuits in this country that we have inadequately curtailed, and we are the most lawsuit-happy country in the world, and multi-million-dollar lawsuits that cause companies to lose their profitability and go out of business and leave this country have been one of the reasons we have lost a lot of jobs overseas.

Cheap labor. I have always said companies who use the newest, most modern technology can compete; but, unfortunately, we have a lot of companies who did not modernize their technology and are still very labor intensive, and they got to where they could not compete, and so they went overseas. But there is no reason that this country should lose one job, let alone a million jobs, and we could lose a million jobs, because of energy prices, because we have huge reserves on our Outer Continental Shelf. We have huge reserves in the Midwest; not as easily accessible to our coastlines where our populations are, but the Outer Continental Shelf is very accessible.

I guess the tragedy is there is a piece in the gulf called Tract 181. It was not under moratorium, as the rest of our Outer Continental Shelf was; it just was not leased. It was there, ready to be leased. The Clinton administration had it listed to be leased. It was delisted for some reason. It is not in the current 5-year plan. There is movement to move it into the 5-year plan. I support that, but that is not enough. But that tract alone is the most quickly available to American consumers, because it is right next to where we produce gas and oil today; and the wells, as they would be produced, would be immediately hooked into the system that is there. The timely thing would be the process of leasing, and then all the paperwork and red tape companies have to go through to get those leases enacted and get the permits to drill the wells and located; and that would take maybe a year or a year and a half. But within 18 months, we could be producing out of that portion of the gulf that is called Tract 181, and I have yet to hear that anybody has a good reason why we have not opened up that tract.

We know we have had protests from Florida. It is not their land. They should not have anything to say about it, in my view, except right at the top where it is close to the panhandle. They are currently talking about slicing that corner off and leasing about 70 percent of it, but we have to pass legislation to do that. Congress has to act. We have not acted. But, in my view, that is not enough. We have to open up the Outer Continental Shelf.

Now, I have a bill that is cosponsored with Mr. ABERCROMBIE from Hawaii, and he has helped me champion this bill. It would open up the Outer Continental Shelf all around this country, the 85 percent that is locked up. It would increase the States rights area from 3 miles to 20 miles. Now, that guarantees that no one would ever see a rig, no one would ever see the production platforms because, after 12 miles, even on a clear day, you cannot see them. They are out of sight. They are just not visible.

Also, I am still waiting for someone to show me a natural gas-producing well that has caused pollution. Natural gas is a gas. In fact, the famous triangle down in the gulf had eruptions of natural gas that actually took planes out of the air. It was actually a crack

that opened up a fissure in the ocean floor that allowed huge amounts of natural gas to escape into the atmosphere in a way that anybody who was in that area was endangered, and the ocean would just bubble because natural gas was coming up.

Natural gas is everywhere underground. It is in lakes, in ponds, in our ocean floor. Natural gas normally seeps up and comes up as bubbles in the water, not harmful to our atmosphere, not harmful to our environment. Natural gas is the clean fuel. It is the one with no No_X, no So_X. If you are worried about CO_2, only one-fourth of the CO_2 comes from natural gas of all the other fossil fuels. It is almost the perfect fuel.

I think the thing that many of us do not realize that was stated today in the news conference by all the production companies, and I have a picture here of everything from tires to cars to plastic objects, to paint, to makeup, face creams, skin softeners, shampoos, all are made from products developed out of natural gas. It is just a wonderful product that God has given us to use, and it is readily available.

This country has no shortage of natural gas. We have a shortage because government has chosen not to allow us to harvest the rich bounty that is out there. We should be using natural gas as the bridge to the future. My vision is that if natural gas were more affordable, we could do like a college in my district that is now paying a premium that is using natural gas to power their bus fleet. All the buses there, many buses in cities in California use natural gas. Here in Washington, D.C. some of the buses use natural gas.

Now, today, that is costing them more than if they were burning diesel; but we all know that diesel does not burn clean like natural gas; and for our cities, it would be environmentally advantageous to have all of our buses, all of our school buses, our transit systems, all of our taxi cabs, all of our short-haul vehicles, short delivery trucks, our air-conditioning and all the repair people that are out on the road and go home every night, they could all be powered with natural gas with a very inexpensive changeover.

A gasoline engine can be altered to burn natural gas. The only problem with natural gas is storing enough of it so that you can do long-distance hauls. So all of our short-haul vehicles, all of our construction vehicles, all of our little engines that are running around in our airports, they could all be on natural gas; and we would benefit by clean air, we would save money if the prices were right. We could lessen our need for oil, foreign oil, from unstable parts of the world at prices set by cartels, groups who want to control us.

There is no reason, there is no good argument why natural gas today, the price of it has become a barrier, but it should be the bridge. The first hydrogen vehicles have been run with natural gas as the fuel to make the hydrogen. Later that will change, but that is currently the easiest way to make hydrogen. So natural gas just feeds into our lives in so many ways, and it is so readily available in this country.

The tragedy is that this country could lose a million or two jobs, because if we do not do something soon to open up supply, one fact that I can give you today is that there are 120 chemical plants, and these chemical plants are very capital intensive. That is one of the reasons they have not moved as quickly as they might have, because there are 120 plants at a cost of $1 billion each that are under construction in the world today. Mr. Speaker, 119 of them are in other countries.

That shows us that the chemical plants of the future, and we are the leader today in making chemicals. We will not be the leader down the road. With these natural gas prices, we are forcing chemical plants to leave. We have already lost over 40 percent of our fertilizer industry because nitrogen fertilizer, between 70 and 80 percent of the cost of making it is natural gas, polymers and plastics; and we use plastics and polymers in every part of our lives. We cannot buy anything that does not have plastic on it, in it, or a part of it. Again, they use an ingredient of natural gas and they use natural gas to melt it and bend it and shape it.

The problem is, as I said earlier, the parts of the world that we compete with, such as Europe, half our price. Dow Chemical a few years ago moved 200 jobs to Germany, not a cheap labor market, a very sophisticated workforce there, a very capable country with technology; Japan, Taiwan and China, a third of our price. And then the rest of the world, under $2 in countries like Africa, and Russia, less than $1.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that this country step up to the plate. If we do not wait any longer, if we do not wait months and years, if we let the employers of this country, we let the producers of this country, the manufacturers of this country know that this Congress is serious about increasing the supply of natural gas, the price will come down. The capital investment is huge. They do not want to build new plants if they do not have to; they do not want to move if they do not have to.

But if we continue to not open up the Outer Continental Shelf, it is my prediction that we will lose a million or more jobs in just a few years ahead. To prevent that, we have to open up some in the Midwest. We have to open up the Outer Continental Shelf, and we have to follow the lead of environmentally sensitive countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, New Zealand, Australia who produce out there every, every day.

Now, why have we not done this? Well, there is really a couple of States and a couple of Governors who have been steadfast opponents, California and Florida. They have argued vociferously that we must not do this. For some reason, they have been convinced that their beautiful coastlines will be ruined and that their tourism business, which is huge, will be ruined. Folks, there are no facts to prove that. There is no evidence to prove that. Those are just outrageous, outlandish statements that continue to be made and believed by many, but not true.

I have asked repeatedly, come and debate me on how we will destroy our shorelines, how we will destroy our beaches by the production of natural gas offshore in the Outer Continental Shelf. That first 200 miles, from 20 miles to 200, that is 180 miles of the Outer Continental Shelf that we would open up. The Peterson-Abercrombie plan, as I mentioned earlier, we will remove the moratorium on all of our shorelines for natural gas only, giving the States 20 miles to protect, and then from 20 to 200, we will produce. Then we will allow States to opt out for oil if they choose to, and they would also be rewarded for a portion of the royalty.

This is on behalf of homeowners, businesses, employers, churches, schools that we need to do this. Florida, for one State, utilizes 233 percent more natural gas than they produce, and they are surrounded by the richest natural gas reserves anywhere in America. I think that is unfair. I think as a State, they need to step up on the plate. They need to produce their fair share. Or they need to curtail their use.

I remember just a few years ago when they were producing most of their electricity from coal. They have recently shifted, at the suggestion of the Federal Government, to natural gas production. Now their electricity is produced by natural gas, and I think, if you are going to be the biggest utilizers per capita of natural gas, and you sit in one of the richest areas of the world, you have to come in and help solve this problem.

Because, Mr. Speaker, Florida and California are rich in tourism. Many of us love to go there and enjoy their beautiful beaches and enjoy their warm weather in the wintertime. But most of the people that I meet there are pretty successful. And as we lose the success in the northern parts of this country, as we lose the ability to manufacture and make products, as we lose those wonderful jobs that people can afford, nice homes, educate their children, have a nice vehicle, have a pension, those are the jobs that are produced by all of these industries that are being challenged by natural gas prices.

And as we lose those, the number of customers, the number of people, I was a retailer for 26 years and I always speak of customers, those who will come to warm places like Florida and California to spend their vacation dollars will not have the money to do that. So they will lose in the end, and the cost of electricity there will sky-

rocket when new contracts come in if these gas prices persist. They will pay horrendous prices.

In fact, it is interesting. I have a letter here from the association, though the governments of Florida and California protest vociferously, the Associated Industries of Florida, and some said to minimize that that this was just a small organization. Well, it has 10,000 members of all kinds of businesses and industry, from mom and pops to large companies in Florida.

□ 1730

And it says we appreciate the reviewing of all the current OCS areas, including the areas that have, until now, been off limits due to the moratorium, which included the Atlantic, Pacific and eastern Gulf of Mexico region. Research documents that these areas hold substantial undiscovered, but technically recoverable energy resources that will be absolutely critical to America's national security and to the continued growth of our economy and to securing jobs for virtually every sector of our economy.

If America does not look to expanding exploration, this is Florida businesses speaking, drilling in those OCS areas, then America will unnecessarily pay a high price and incur a heavy burden.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration forecasts that by 2025 petroleum demand will increase by 39 percent and natural gas demand, by 34 percent. Higher energy prices have exacted a toll on our economy by slowing our growth already. Natural gas costs for the chemical industry in America have increased by $10 billion since 2003.

Of 120 chemical plants being built around the world with price tags of $1 billion or more each, only one is being built in the United States. As a result, Associated Industries of Florida recommends to the MNS, Mineral Management Agency, that expanded leases and sales are important to our country, to our citizens and to our way of life.

To not utilize our available energy resources when it can be accomplished in an environmentally sensitive way would be a disservice to our country. We need to ensure that we have a brighter future by adopting the OCS leasing program.

Now tomorrow I will be a part of a natural gas hearing that will be held by the Interior Committee and the Energy and Water Committee of Appropriations, and in those hearings we will bring in the users of natural gas and we will hear from them; and here is some testimony that I think will probably be there from the Illinois Farm Bureau.

''Whether it is gasoline, diesel, electricity or natural gas, farmers and ranchers must have access to reliable and affordable energy inputs. Unfortunately, our country's existing energy policies make it increasingly difficult for all of us to produce food and fiber for the United States and the world while providing for our own families. Based on USDA data, the American Farm Bureau estimates that increased energy input prices during the 2003 and 2004 growing season cost U.S. agriculture $6 billion in added expenses.''

That comes right out of the farmers' profits. And we know farmers do not get rich. Farmers work hard to produce the milk and the grain and the food that we feed our families. Based on USDA data, ''the 2005 growing season has been especially dismal from a business cost perspective for agriculture. Higher energy costs, and specifically natural gas costs, have come at a time when commodity prices are extremely depressed.''

So on top of high energy prices they have had low commodity prices, so they have not gotten a good price for their products.

Natural gas is critically important to agriculture, because it is used both directly and indirectly in nearly every aspect of farm operations.''

Here we go, natural gas used again and again.

''Natural gas is used to produce nitrogen fertilizers and farm chemicals as well as electricity for lighting and irrigation. Natural gas and LP gas are also used in agriculture to dry grain as well as heat barns and confined facilities of livestock and poultry operations. Needless to say, it is vitally important that U.S. agriculture and associated industries have access to affordable supplies of natural gas.''

Then they go on to say, ''There are several reasons why the price of natural gas has skyrocketed. First, our national energy policy has discouraged domestic exploration.'' It is actually prohibited, not just discouraged; it is prohibited, recovery of oil and natural gas, which has made us more dependent on foreign energy sources. ''Second, many power plants have been forced to use natural gas for generating electricity in order to comply with environmental regulation, even though we have huge reserves of coal and the technology for its safe, clean use. The Energy Information Administration estimates demand for natural gas will increase 54 percent by 2025, with electric power generation accounting for 33 percent of that consumption.''

In closing, this is what the farm community said:

''The 'perfect storm,' the combination of significantly higher energy and fertilizer cost, coupled with falling grain prices, spells serious trouble for rural America. For this reason, it is our hope Congress will act soon to further address the energy needs of our Nation and find solutions for this natural gas problem we face.''

It was interesting, my staff was contacted by a Florida paper recently that said, Why is your boss so persistent on this issue? Why does he not just say his piece and go away? They said, We checked it out, and he is not highly financially supported by the oil industry or the natural gas industry, and so why is he doing this? And I guess I was a little disappointed in that, that we would only do something because somebody supported us.

And my answer to that newspaper is, I am speaking on behalf of the citizens in my district and all of rural America and all of America for affordable energy prices to heat our homes, for affordable energy prices to conduct our businesses and our churches and our Ys and our hospitals because that is what makes it tick.

And these energy prices are going to put a kink in every budget in America, from homeowners to hospitals to retailers to education; they are all going to pay a significantly higher price. And our service agencies that are out there helping people, volunteering for people, their heating bills are going to be doubling this year, and that is going to take money away from the ability to help people.

An interesting thing, going back to chemicals, which people just do not realize. Chemicals and plastics are used in 96 percent of all U.S. manufactured goods including computers, cars, clothing and more. Since 1998, the chemical industry has warned repeatedly that the U.S. is facing a natural gas crisis. And what have we done about it?

I have been talking to the chemical companies for 5 years. They came to my office. They do not reside near me; they are not in my district. And I said to them, Why did you come to me? This was 3, 4 years ago. And they said, Well, someone said you were interested in the natural gas issue and you were stating that you saw natural gas as a problem.

And I did many years ago. I attended breakfasts put on by the Edison Institute for Electricity. They kept showing this huge amount of natural gas that was going to be consumed for a 12-to-15-year period to make electricity until something else could take its place.

And then I went to a breakfast briefing in the Senate and the speaker was Daniel Yergin, who wrote the book ''The Prize'' on oil, and he stated that this huge use and commitment of natural gas for electric generation, if it was not coupled with the opening up of reserves in this country in places we have not been allowed to drill, it would cause an escalation of prices. It would take a few years. And folks were here.

I did not expect gas to be $14.50 this year. Many of us on the committee were talking that, you know, as it was $7, $8 and bumping around $9, approaching the fall that we would probably see $10 or $11 gas this winter. Well, when Katrina came and shut off some supply, we were clear up to $14.50, an unheard-of price, from $2 to $14.50.

If milk was that kind of an increase, we would have $28-a-gallon milk. Would we not be dealing with that? I think we would.

As I said earlier here, since 1998, the chemical industry has warned repeatedly that the U.S. is facing a natural gas crisis. Now the impact is being felt by all Americans. With winter fast approaching, the government warns that

home owners who rely on natural gas for heat, about 52 percent of the Nation's households can expect at a minimum a 48 percent increase, and in some parts of the country, a 70 to 80 percent increase.

We, in industry, have been feeling the pressure of high-priced natural gas for years and have done everything we could to remain globally competitive. For example, Dow has improved its own energy efficiency by 42 percent in the last 15 years. Since 2002, we have raised product prices more than 50 percent, shut down 23 inefficient plants in North America and shifted some production overseas to regions of the world where energy prices are lower. So there is no doubt that our company and our industry will continue to grow and thrive. It is simply a question of where.

Now, I do not know how clear they have to say it before this Congress decides to do something about it. We have been warned by industry after industry after industry that these current natural gas prices will prohibit them from being profitable and competitive in this country; and if that is not a clear message, I do not know what it is.

I urge my colleagues, I urge this administration, I urge the States of Florida and California to become a part of the solution to get away from the old rhetoric that natural gas is a dirty commodity. Natural gas is the clean fuel. Natural gas is the fuel that can bring us clean air attainment in our cities if we use it in transportation. It is the bridge that will get us to where $60 oil is going to change a lot.

A lot of things are going to be competitive. A lot of things are going to work. You are going to see increases in all kinds of alternatives, but it is going to be slow and gradual. There is no quick fix. There is no silver bullet.

So I am urging the Members of this Congress, I am urging this administration, I am urging the governments of California and Florida prospectively, because they have been the opponents; they are the ones who speak out and say, We must stop this.

A natural gas producing well on our outer continental coast is not an environmental hazard. It is the future of America. It is what will make us competitive. It will make our farmers profitable again. It will make our chemical companies want to stay here and grow here.

They are going to grow. They just stated that. They are going to grow. They are going to prosper somewhere. But will our chemicals in our hardware stores and our supermarkets be American-made? They are today. But will they be in the future?

Will our farmers be using fertilizer from foreign countries? Some of them are today. In a very short period of time, they will all be using fertilizer from foreign countries because the gas prices of today just do not make it affordable to produce fertilizer, chemicals, polymers, plastic, steel, aluminum in this country.

I have been joined by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) who requested this hour, who had other duties take him away, and I would like to welcome him to join me.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I appreciate the gentleman picking up this responsibility that actually was mine. And as you know, even though the scheduling around this city does not reflect that you cannot be in two places at one time, in fact, we can only be in one place at a time.

One would think that with all the work that you have done on the natural gas situation here, the need all across this country, that sometimes you are in two places at one time with the media that we have today. And it takes that kind of a voice.

I want to lend my voice in support of the work that you have done, and I am glad that you stepped up to take the lead. I know it takes a lot of commitment and it takes a lot of research. It takes a lot of background and it costs a little sleep from time to time and a lot of energy.

So that is what we are after here is energy in this country, and I want to see if I can add a little bit different perspective to this energy issue.

Of course, we talked about fertilizer costs and we talked about the cost for manufacturing, the cost of heating homes and the list goes on and on. But I want to emphasize that Pennsylvania and Iowa run across about the same latitude. You can draw a line of latitude that will intersect both States, and we are tied together for a lot of other reasons. You are kind of the eastern end of the corn belt and we are kind of the heart of the corn belt where I am.

But anybody that raises a crop uses nitrogen fertilizer. And if you are raising corn you are probably going to use more nitrogen fertilizer than any other crop. And 90 percent of the cost of that nitrogen fertilizer is the cost of natural gas. And we have seen in the last few years the price of natural gas go up 400 percent here in the United States. That means the cost of your nitrogen fertilizer goes up 90 percent of 400 percent. And that would be 360 percent increase in nitrogen fertilizer cost, just to do the quick math.

Now it is not just the cost of that. And of course we are seeing our grain prices are not showing an increase. And so the overhead goes up and up, and the margin gets narrower and narrower, and the producers, I will say our corn producers, have to figure out a way to increase their yields to compensate for this.

They do that. Of course, the landlord then sees that and raises the rent. It is a vicious circle that we are all involved in. It is free enterprise, I know. But a nation has to have a solid and sound natural gas and energy policy, and you cannot just wake up some morning and say, Gee, I wish I would have done this different 30 years ago, throw a switch and fix it. This is a long-term, downrange plan that we have to have; and we are paying a price for not acting for years and years. In fact, for a generation we have not been nearly aggressive enough in opening up the energy supplies here in the United States.

And we can go down on this argument, this argument that says, Well, gee, if we would just conserve more energy, if we would drive cars that get 30 miles to the gallon instead of 26 miles to the gallon or even 40 miles to the gallon, if we would use alternative energy sources and renewable energy sources, we can do that and we should do many of those things. I will not subscribe to all of those things. In fact, I will tell you that I support the expanded use of nuclear for electrical power. It is the safest and cleanest and the cheapest that we can produce. And the record in this country establishes that.

But that is one part of it, and we are not likely to be able to build more hydroelectric so that we can generate more electricity with just the gravity of water flowing through there. Because of environmental barriers people want to take out dams rather than let us build them.

And so coal is another difficulty. We had a little problem with air quality. We have done pretty well with that. But you cannot do everything with coal. And by the way, it takes, you have got to haul coal sometimes a long way. And I know that there is coal that is trained from Wyoming on down to my area in western Iowa. That is a long way to haul the coal.

Now, but we need gas for a lot of reasons. We need to heat our houses, we need it for our businesses and we need it for our fertilizer. And by the way, you take a fall. Now this is a good fall, and there was not a lot of grain dried. If you have a wet fall, you will dry a lot of grain. And we will use not really exactly natural gas, but we will use LP. And the difference is this, that the LP comes out sometimes from often the same hole as the natural gas and you use a gas separator in there. The natural gas is the methane, and the LP is mostly propane, but it also can have butane in it, so you use the gas separator.

Seventy-eight percent of the LP that we use to dry our grain comes right out of the natural gas well; 22 percent then is stripped out in the crude oil processing and the refinement process when you are making gas and diesel fuel and oil you get the balance of that LP out of there, merge that together, pipeline that up on LP to the Midwest and we put that in to dry our grain in the fall and to heat our houses outside and out in the countryside where we are we do not have natural gas connected to us.

All those things are tied together. It comes out of the same hole. The cost of LP is linked to the cost of natural gas. Energy is all part of the whole equation, but there is a difference in natural gas energy because it is not a

portable energy that is easy to put on a ship and bring it here, because by the time you compress it and liquify it, bring it here and convert it back to gas it costs money and costs time to do that, and we have got limited capacity.

We are looking to build a couple more liquefied natural gas plants refining plants to convert from liquid into gas again. It takes time to do that. But we have a tremendous supply of natural gas on the Outer Continental Shelf in the United States. And God bless Ronald Reagan for drawing that dotted line out there at 200 miles offshore in the United States. I believe that was in about 1983. When he did that he opened up a tremendous amount for energy resources for the United States, not just natural gas, other minerals out there too that we have not even found yet, plus a lot of crude oil in the same areas where you will find natural gas in many cases. But that 200-mile limit that Reagan defined for us is a limit that lets us have an almost unlimited supply of natural gas.

Now, I will give you some examples here on how that works. The North Slope of Alaska, where we went up there in 1972 to open that area up and drill for oil on the North Slope of Alaska, where we had to build the pipeline from up there down to Valdez in order to put that oil on tankers to get it down here to the lower 48 States so we could market it.

But the provision was not in place at that time to build a natural gas pipeline because why would you pipe natural gas down to Valdez to compress it into liquid, put it on a ship, send it down to California, turn it back into a gas when you had a countryside that had all this natural gas in it, natural gas that was probably less than 2 bucks back there in 1972.

So we did not develop the natural gas, but it is there. The wells are drilled. It is available. There is 38 trillion cubic feet of natural gas on the North Slope of Alaska sitting up there right now. It needs a pipeline down to the Lower 48. It is over 4,700 miles from Prudhoe Bay, mile post zero on the Alaska pipeline on down to Kansas City if you want to pick a place in the middle of the country, over 4,700 miles.

If you go the other way and go south, where is there a lot of gas south? Well, we know offshore in Louisiana, offshore on the entire gulf coast.

Go a little farther. Venezuela, there is gas that we are paying $14.50 for is $1.60 there. You know that is only 2,700 miles from the coast of Venezuela up to Kansas City and it is 4,700 miles from Kansas City to Prudhoe Bay and the North Slope of Alaska.

But it is not just a measure of a pipeline from Alaska to Kansas City which, I do support that because I want more energy into the Lower 48 States for a lot of different ways. But it is not the measure then of 4,700 miles from Alaska to Kansas City versus Kansas City to Venezuela.

It is because there is another measure, and that is the measure of 406 cubic feet of natural gas that is on the Outer Continental Shelf that is right there next to already processing plants, pipelines, drill rigs. We have the network all there. All we need to do is expand that drilling.

This country needs it. And these Americans deserve it. We need to drive this $14.50 price down. We have got to cut it by half at least. We can do it if we can open 406 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I guess I want to conclude with the following, that there is no one who has a good argument that we do not need to open a supply of natural gas. There are those who think there are other ways to do it, that LNG is the big answer. I do not think that is the big answer. It can be a help. But we what we really need to do, the natural gas supply that is the most readily available to population centers of this country is the Outer Continental Shelf.

All leading nations produce there, and they have clean beaches. They have great tourism. It does not have to be a detriment. And I urge those from Florida and California who keep decrying that this is going to be the demise of their beaches and their tourism to show me the facts. Do not give me rhetoric. Do not make brash statements. Give me the facts of where a natural gas producing well has polluted a beach.

I am asking Florida and California, who are huge consumers of natural gas, to join with us and be a part of the solution. This is a problem facing America. We cannot afford to have two States holding up the energy policy of this country who are the largest consumers of natural gas in enormous amounts per capita compared to other States, who use most of their electricity that is made with natural gas. And I urge them to come to the table as part of the solution. Show me where natural gas wells have polluted the beach, and I will be there.

I have had no one take me up on that offer. Natural gas wells or natural gas flowing out of steel pipe into a collection system into our homes, into our factories. Natural gas will depend on whether America remains a competitive nation. It is so entwined in our economy and our lives that we cannot continue to have government curtail the production and expand the use.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 3146

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that my name be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 3146.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

□ 1745

NEWS YOU WILL NOT HEAR ABOUT

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, while watching the nightly news last night, I was shocked by the stories being reported or, more accurately, by those stories that were not being reported.

What, you say. Well, during the month of October we added over 50,000 jobs to our economy. Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma wreaked havoc in cities across our gulf coast, displacing hundreds of thousands of people from their homes and jobs.

During this time, our economy was still able to continue to grow in the face of these tragic events. Our Republican policies worked to stimulate the economy. Job creation averaged 194,000 per month for the year prior to Hurricane Katrina. Third quarter GDP increased by 3.8 percent, capping 10 quarters of growth in a row. Yet you would not know it unless you searched deep past the front pages of your local papers. There have been increases in new and existing home sales, declines in unemployment, and increases in business investment. All good news.

Mr. Speaker, an examination of the facts makes it quite clear. Republicans have a plan to reform the Federal Government and increase savings for all the American people.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House once again, and we would like to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have one more hour on the 30-something Working Group tonight. We have been coming to the floor daily and mainly speaking recently about the budget and what effects it is going to have on the American people throughout this country.

We have asked our colleagues within the working group to come to the floor, share some of their concerns, talk about our Democratic alternative, which failed in committee, not because it was not an alternative of merit and of commitment and making sure that we place ourselves in heading in the direction towards the balanced budget by 2012, but it failed because we were in the minority. One Republican on the opposite side of the aisle did vote against the proposal that will be coming to the floor in the coming days, seeing it in a way that fiscal responsibility is important but making sure that we do not leave Americans behind who sent us up here to represent them.

I am honored tonight to be joined by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms.

WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and also my good friend, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS), who has been a part of this in making sure that we put American priorities forward. But I must say that there is a lot of work that needs to be done.

Tonight we are going to make sure that the Members know and also the American people know exactly what they are going to be voting on coming the next couple of days. There will be a bill in the Committee on Rules, and we will have debate here on the floor; but Members need to know exactly what they are voting for because as we, Mr. Speaker, look at this bill as written, veterans are going to have longer lines, they are going to pay higher co-payments, they are going to pay higher premiums. And those individuals that are coming out of theater, some 130,000, now we have 150-something thousand in theater of war, when they come back and they find themselves waiting in longer lines for what we promised them as it relates to health care, as it relates to benefits and not leaving out their families and children, I think it is something we need to pay very close attention to.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, it is again a pleasure to be here with you to talk about the issues that are important to the American people. I think the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) would both agree that this week really everything is going to come to a head. The choices that Members in this Chamber are going to be asked to make, more than any other week that I have been here, I think, are going to be emblematic of where our priorities are.

The choices that we are going to have to make on this budget reconciliation bill, which is Washington-speak for budget cuts, is going to show who is for the American people in making sure that they can sustain a decent quality of life and who is against that concept and is more supportive of making sure that the wealthy can stay wealthy. That is really what it boils down to.

Just to give you, Mr. Speaker, an idea, as well as anyone who can hear our conversation, of exactly what we are going to be asked to choose between this week, the Republican leadership and the Republican Members have been making a lot of hay about the spending cuts that they are going to ask us to vote for, that they are needed reductions because we have to do something about this deficit. And we agree. We agree that there needs to be something done about the deficit.

But the difference between our approach and the Republican approach is that our approach would actually reduce the deficit, and their approach actually adds to it. If you have a little less than $55 billion in budget cuts, yet still have 70-some-odd-billion dollars in tax cuts, the difference between that is $20 billion more added on to the deficit.

Now, I can tell you honestly that I was not very good at math when I was younger and struggled with it a little bit, but that is pretty simple math. That is not complex. It is not calculus. It does not require an advanced degree. Seventy minus 50 is 20. And it is not a negative number. It is a positive number added on to the deficit.

Let us demonstrate that while we are still providing $70 billion to tax cuts for the wealthy we are cutting the following things: for the sake of more tax cuts in this budget reconciliation bill, students can expect to pay as much as $5,800 more for college. For the sake of more tax cuts, 300,000 of America's neediest will be left without food stamps. For the sake of more tax cuts, we will fail in our obligation to bring hurricane victims lasting relief. For the sake of more tax cuts, $10 billion, $10 billion with a B, will be slashed from Medicaid. One in four children in America get their health care from Medicaid.

For the sake of more tax cuts, we will ensure that the deficit remains high and the burden of creating more debt and paying that debt by our selfishness in choosing to help the wealthy at the expense of the people who are the most in need and the people who are just working every day to make ends meet, that is the debt we are passing on to our children and our children's children. And it is just mind-boggling to me. I know I am a freshman. The two gentlemen have been here longer than me. Maybe I am naive. Maybe the gentleman can provide some clarity because to me it is simple math.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for yielding.

I am honored as always to be here with my colleague from Florida and my colleague from Ohio to talk about what is an enormously important vote on the floor of the House this week. I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) at the outset for exposing one of the great myths behind this vote. As you know, there is a requirement that when we introduce bills in the House that we label the legislation, that we give it a title that is supposed to be roughly descriptive of the purpose of the bill. So we are told, well, this is a deficit reduction act, and I thank the gentlewoman for laying bare that myth.

□ 1800

When we finish with the tax cuts that are still being contemplated, dividend tax cuts, for example, in the next several weeks, and we do the simple math, our deficit will be worse than it is today.

This is not a Deficit Reduction Act. Something very different is at stake. This is not about cutting spending, it is not about saving the government money; it is about a different set of values being in the saddle.

All of us who are here have been in the Congress fairly recently. Mr. RYAN, Mr. MEEK and I came here in 2003, and you joined us this year. We all came with this notion that we stood for a particular set of values about government. One of the values that we most deeply believe in is the idea of obligation, of strong people to weak people, of people who are in one place in society, being related and connected to people in a very different place in society.

A lot of us ran on that, a lot of us talked about that. As strongly as we believe in our party, we hope that those just aren't partisan values. We hope that those are values that are shared all across this aisle, in the center, left and the right, the Democratic and the Republican side.

But what is sad about this week is that a very different set of values are now in the saddle. You touched on some of them, but they are very much worth underscoring: 300,000 families in this country who are getting food stamps. If the majority has its way, those 300,000 people will lose their food stamps, not because they have committed fraud, not because their income status has changed in the last several years, not because they have been shown to not need food stamps but simply because a different set of values are in the saddle.

You talked about, or you touched upon the question of child support. If the majority has its way, the Federal Government will walk away from a bipartisan commitment to help States go out and find deadbeat dads and enforce the laws that require people who have children to be responsible for them. We will see a party that styles itself as the party of family values walk away from that commitment. Again, it is not because of saving money, it is because a different set of values are in the saddle.

You talked about Medicaid. For the first time, if the majority has its way, working-class and poor families will have to pay a premium and a copay for their children, who are very poor, to go to the doctor. When we came here, both parties believed that if you are very poor in this society, then your kids are entitled to health care, and, yes, that is a social obligation that we owe to people who are struggling. Now a different set of values are in the saddle, and we are told they have to make a copay.

You touched on another basic matter. People who are legal immigrants, not illegal, not people who violate some immigration law to come here, but all those people who come here, played by the rules and have been naturalized as U.S. citizens, but have not yet shared in the bounty and prosperity of this country. Right now, most of them are allowed to receive food stamps.

If the majority has its way, 20- to 30,000 of those people who are eligible will lose that eligibility, again, not to save money, but because a different set of values are in the saddle.

To make a basic point about the food stamps provision in this reconciliation bill, $800,000, the 300,000 families will be shaved off the food stamp rolls, that adds up to about $844 million. $840 million in a $3.7 trillion discretionary budget is about one-sixteenth of 1 percent. That is worth almost nothing to the U.S. Treasury, but it is the margin of survival that means almost everything to these families.

We could go on, issue after issue. The value of the money that will be saved will be offset by tax cuts or is altogether insignificant. But the impact of those cuts is devastating to people who are watching us right now.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this is the moral argument of our generation. I agree with you 100 percent, but I think there is an economic component of this, too. If we are going to be a great nation economically, we need to have healthy children, who are going to be able to go to school and learn so that they can become scientists and engineers, so that we can drive this economy through the 21st century.

As much as it is a moral imperative, it is an economic imperative that will continue to make the United States of America a strong country economically and militarily.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I absolutely concur with that point. There are two points that we will have to make constantly over the next 48 hours. This is not just about altruism. I wish that we could convince our friends and colleagues on the other side of the aisle just by saying it is wrong to single out the children of poor people for sacrifice. I wish we could convince them that this budget just has the wrong set of priorities on moral grounds.

The reality is there is another equally compelling set of arguments we will have to appeal to, and it is the notion of our own economic self-interest. We already are a country where the gap between skilled and unskilled workers is a high one. We are already a country where the gap between children who are successful and children who are underperforming is a high one.

We are already a country that builds all kinds of walls between our own people, and that is not good for our economy. It makes us less productive than we ought to be. It makes us less prosperous than we ought to be as a nation. But we can only close these gaps if we empower more of our people.

That is very much what is at stake as we contemplate this vote in the next several days, two different visions.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I wonder, and we have asked this question before here, I wonder where the religious right organizations are that during the election were so engaged and involved in the Christian Coalition and promoting Christian values on a couple of issues. I cannot think of any more pronounced Christian values than taking care of those among you who cannot take care of themselves, for whatever reason.

It is stunning to me, growing up Catholic and spending 12 years in Catholic schools with nuns and priests and brothers, that the issue of poverty that you see more in the Bible than probably any other social issue, that somehow the silence is deafening here on these issues of us trying to help poor people and the majority actually causing harm to them. All these organizations that help put these folks in office are lost and cannot find their way.

I do not want to say that their membership is lost, because the people I go to church with, the people who represent Christian social organizations in my community, are very, very, very concerned about this.

I would hope that in the course of the next 48 hours we are able to bring this to their attention so that maybe we can put a stop to this before it actually harms young children.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. The gentleman's bringing up faith as it relates to this budget document is incredibly important, because our friends on the other side of the aisle throw around family values as a term and as part of their make-up and try to contrast us, as if that is not part of ours.

Let us just look at what the faith community is saying about this budget, and what they have been saying about this budget. This week, this past week, we had a number of members of the organized religious community come to Washington and urge the Republican leadership not to pursue this budget reconciliation document.

You had Reverend Jim Wallis, the founder of Sojourners and Convener of Call to Renewal. You had Rabbi David Saperstein, who is the director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism. You had Reverend Elenora Giddings Ivory, who is the Director of the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church.

What Reverend Ivory said when she was here, she said, ''I am here today to express concern for the Federal budget reconciliation packages under consideration in the House and the Senate. Our Nation is about to balance its budget on the backs of the poor. Is that a moral thing to do? The Federal budget is a reflection of what we see as important and primary. Does the spending package under consideration reflect a caring and a compassionate society? Does it reflect you as a citizen of faith?''

I think that each of us, if we ask and look inside our own hearts, Republicans and Democrats alike, would have to answer each of those questions, absolutely not.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, let me touch on the point the gentlewoman just made about faith. All of us were told different things and were given dictates by our faith. But one very universal view across all denominations that we know is this idea that you do not start sacrifices with the most vulnerable of our people. You do not ask the weakest of our people to be the first to give. You try to bring some moral foundation of equity to all that you do.

Those are notions that ring across every denomination, and indeed nondenominations that still have ethical values in this world. What is striking about this budget reconciliation is that it is the first major government document that I have seen that says, let us ask the first people to sacrifice to be what Matthew would call ''the least of these.'' Let us ask the first people to sacrifice to be the weakest of our people.

This is something that is fundamentally wrong and, again, it is at the heart of this debate. A lot of us in this Chamber would be open to a discussion about fiscal discipline. We would be open to a discussion about budget cuts. We would be open to a discussion about shared responsibility, but only if it ran across all lines. This is as powerful a point as I think we can make in the next several days.

We are not asking our children to sacrifice. We are not asking the children of the people who go to our fundraisers to sacrifice. We are asking the children of the people who cannot get in our fund-raisers because they cannot give $250 or $1,000 a head. We are asking the children of people who will never walk inside this Chamber or be able to spend a million dollars every 2 years to find a way to get here.

We are asking the people who are doing the work in our country, the people who are waiting on the tables, the people who are driving the trucks, the people who are bearing a lot of the labor. We are saying to them, yes, your children may be on Medicaid, but we can save some money if we pare back our responsibility to them. Yes, your kid may need a student loan, but we can pare back some money. We can save some money if we cut and limit our responsibility to them.

I think that this is wrong.

The final point that I will make before I yield is this one. We have an obligation to talk about this debate in terms of right and wrong this week. This is not simply a matter of different political theories. It is not a matter of different economic theories. It is about a different value set. Some of us who have heard the word ''value'' used so freely in this Chamber, some of us who have heard the word ''value'' used so freely to label and to exclude and to stigmatize, well, this is about values. Even Abraham sacrificed his own children, not the children of others. So that is front and center for this vote.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly yield to the gentleman from Ohio to discuss something that is on our minds this

week. How can we make this case to our colleagues, because I believe, as all of you believe that our colleagues that are in this Chamber are not hard-hearted, mean or evil people who just want to hurt folks? How do we find some way to make the case to them that what we are on the verge of doing violates every value that we have as Americans and violates every sense of connection that we have?

□ 1815

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think we are not alone here, and I think there are some conservatives who are out there who agree with what we are saying here. We say it all the time during our Special Orders. This is not a Democrat or Republican thing. This is about putting the interests of the country before your own particular party. That is what we are trying to do here.

This is a quote from Cal Thomas, who is one of the most conservative columnists in the country, who says, ''Here is a suggestion to the Republican majority. Don't start with the poor, start with the rich.'' That is Cal Thomas talking.

And let me just put this up here. This is the tax cut, my friends. This is the tax cut. This is what people who make over $440,000 a year get, and this is what our brothers and sisters get who make $20,000, $35,000, and $40,000. Why can we not ask these people? Why do our leaders not have the courage to ask these people? We know they contribute to their campaigns. We know they get corporate welfare. I bet many of these people are executives in the oil companies who got $16 billion in corporate subsidies. We know that. We are sure that some of these people who make all this money and are getting the big tax cut represent the pharmaceutical industry that are getting $100 million in corporate subsidies. We are confident that the executives of the big agribusinesses are receiving some of this tax cut, and they are also getting corporate subsidies for that.

Why can the Republican leadership in this Chamber, in the Senate, and in the White House not ask these folks to give up just a small little wee bit of this, just a little bit of this so that we can make sure that Medicaid, Medicare, which is on the table in the Senate version, $80 billion over the next 10 years is proposed to be cut out of that. The Republican Study Committee wants to cut even more and push the prescription drug benefit back, not do anything to reduce the cost.

We are making decisions that are hurting these people because we do not have the courage to ask those people who have benefited most from society to give just a little bit back.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman will yield, there is a way we can make changes which take us in a new direction: it is election day. We do not have to continue down this road. We do not have to continue to prop up and add to the bottom line of the wealthy. We can send the Republican leadership home, and we can start today.

What I think we would all like to see happen in the next couple of hours in Virginia, in Ohio, in New Jersey, in New York, in California, and anywhere else there is an election of significance, of course, all elections are significant, but where the more significant offices and contests are being held, we would like to urge all voters to go out to the polls tonight in those communities.

And just to help people know, there is still time left in Virginia. The polls close at 7 p.m. So there is about 45 minutes left. In Ohio, and these are all local times, in Ohio, the polls close at 7:30. In New Jersey, the polls close at 8:00 p.m. In New York, the polls close at 9 p.m. And in California, the polls close at 8 p.m. So we would urge all people who have an opportunity to make change in their State to cast their ballots today on election day. Make sure you get to your polling place and cast your vote to move this country in a new direction so we can continue to fight to make these changes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just to transition our conversation from the tax cuts to the whole issue of where we are going in terms of the budget cuts, in addition to cuts that affect children, in addition to child support payments, in addition to Medicaid cuts, this budget will do more damage than we have ever done to people who are trying to expand their horizons and get access to higher education. What is unbelievable about these budget cuts is that in terms of higher education, this is the most significant cut in history being made in this budget document to financial aid than we have ever seen before.

Mr. Speaker, we are joined tonight by my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from the great State of Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN), and he has been a champion on this issue in trying to raise people's awareness of just exactly what this Republican budget document would do to people who are struggling to get access to higher education. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I thank my colleague, Mr. Speaker, for yielding to me. It is great to join the gentlewoman from Florida and the gentleman from Florida and the gentleman from Ohio and this 30-Something Group that has really done a fantastic job to help educate Americans about the many challenges that are being faced here and the things we can do about it, the things my colleagues are taking the lead on in this Congress.

I wish I could join you in age, I am a 40-something, but I am not far away; and like many people, I had an opportunity to really benefit from the student loan program, as did my wife. Even though I worked my way through college and my family was able to help me some, I still could not have done it without the student loan program.

What I am sad to see and really concerned about is these Republican proposals in this budget reconciliation, which is, for those listening, the equivalent of us balancing our checkbook at home to figure out what we can afford and what we cannot. They have proposed the largest cuts to the student loan program in history, in history, of $14 billion. It is a big number. So to really bring it down to the individual student and family, already, even before those cuts, the average student typically has about $17,500 in debt. That is already. Now, on top of that, these proposals would add an additional almost $6,000.

Mr. Speaker, this comes at a time when we really need to be expanding opportunity and at a time when we really need to be opening up access to higher education. We all know in our country that is the road to opportunity.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. And if we look at the number of engineers and scientists that a lot of these other countries are graduating, last year alone China graduated 600,000 engineers. We graduated 70,000, with most of them foreign born. So to put additional barriers up, an additional burden or two on someone who is trying to construct financially a way to go to school, it makes absolutely zero sense economically for our country.

Look at what the GI Bill did for this country, because we had educated people going out into the work force as doctors and lawyers and scientists and engineers. Look what the space program did. The goal of sending people to the Moon was to motivate and organize a country in math and science and physics and a variety of other areas that led to tremendous developments and discoveries that otherwise would not have been, and that led to great economic growth.

So the gentleman is exactly right.

Mr. CARNAHAN. We even heard in the Committee on Science, on which I serve, many leading CEOs from around the country came to testify before our committee talking about the need for innovation if we are going to be able to compete in this new global economy.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. There it is. That is not KENDRICK MEEK saying that or Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. These are CEOs.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Exactly. They are saying we have to really start to win the battle of young minds to get them into science and math education so that we can compete and innovate in this new global economy. This just takes us backwards.

The statistics are alarming. Studies have shown that financial barriers alone prevent 4½ million high school students from attending a 4-year public university.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We actually have a chart that outlines some of the things my colleague is about to go over so we can make sure that people have it very clearly in front of them

Mr. CARNAHAN. I would really appreciate my colleagues trying to get

that information out. Again, I think it is important as this debate proceeds over the next few days and weeks ahead, some believe a vote could come as early as Thursday, that people back home, families, students, leaders in education, contact their Members to let them know this is not the way to address the financial needs in our country.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If my colleague wishes to go over the details he was beginning to talk about on the bottom of the chart.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Certainly.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. What we try to do in this 30-something time, we do a lot of talking, but we also want to show people with third-party validators and with the specifics blown up in poster-size form so that they have it both in graphical depiction as well as in description from us individually. So that was just showing my colleague that while he goes through just exactly what these cuts in student aid do, we have that up for the folks at home.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We will also post this on our Web site and make it available.

Mr. CARNAHAN. And I have just been handed a copy so I can read along as well.

But as we mentioned, already, even before these cuts, the average student has $17,500 in debt. Over the last 5 years, as if the debt were not bad enough, tuition is up 57 percent at public colleges, up 32 percent at private colleges and universities, and 41 percent of college grads average over $3,000 in credit card debt. So, again, the statistics paint a very clear picture that this is not the way to go.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The gentleman is exactly correct. This is great to have the gentleman here because, obviously, he brings in a new perspective from the Science Committee, which reinforces a lot of the things we have been saying. So we appreciate the gentleman being here.

One of the things we have to add onto this, as if this is not enough for a 22-year-old to have to overcome, $17,500 of debt, $3,000 in credit card debt, so you are already over $20,000 in debt before you even get out of school, let alone if you want to get a law degree, a master's or a Ph.D., or whatever it may be, would be an additional burden. In a weak economy that is not growing the kinds of jobs necessary to move our country forward and to maintain our economic superiority, add to that the $27,000 that every single citizen owes to pay the $8 trillion in debt that we have in the United States of America.

Our friends on the other side, the Republican majority, had to raise the debt ceiling to over $8 trillion, and each citizen owes $27,000. So we try to put this in perspective for people who are having babies today, and our generation who have young kids, 2 or 3 years old. Run this number out 20 years. If you have a 2-year-old, run that number out 20 years at a 57 percent increase every 5 years.

What does that number look like 22 years from now and what does the debt look like 22 years from now if we keep running these huge structural deficits, paying interest on the loan?

Pull it out. Get it. Get it right now. Let us get this thing up here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Please.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Please. Show them. Go ahead. I yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I want to thank my colleague from Ohio for yielding. The gentleman must have read it on my forehead when he started talking about how this Republican majority has led us into an area we have never been before as a country. And I am not talking about leading in a way that Americans will be proud of the situation we are in now or how other countries are now looking at the opportunity of owning a piece of the United States, which is basically what is happening financially.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let us lay this out real quick before my colleague puts the cherry on top.

So we have $17,500 in student loan debt and $3,000 in credit card debt. Run that out 20-some years. A child born today owes $27,000 to the debt that we have in the United States of America, the $8 trillion. Every citizen owes $27,000.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And change.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And some change. And we are continually running these structural deficits at over $400 billion to $500 billion, with a war and natural disasters. So we are borrowing money to pay for this.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. If the gentleman will yield, this feeds into the incompetence that we talk about. We talk about it, and we do not use the term loosely. We use it because it is well founded.

□ 1830

We take this chart out every night, and every time we get an opportunity to share with not only the Members on what they are doing. Members need to realize what they are voting on. I am not saying that some do not, but they have to realize what they are voting on.

Here is basically what President Bush has done in 4 years that other Presidents have managed not to do in 224 years, as it relates to foreign holdings of U.S. Treasury debt. This statistic is from the United States Department of Treasury, a third-party validator. This is not from me or Mr. RYAN or Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Let me say this, $1 trillion in debt that was accumulated over 224 years, from 1776, borrowing money from foreign governments, President Bush, who did not do it by himself, and I have said this before, and I can guarantee he could not do it by himself, $1.05 trillion in a period of 4 years. In a period of 4 years, he has accomplished something with the Republican majority that has not been accomplished by 42 other Presidents, 224 years in this country of having the Democrats, Republicans, Whig Party; and this President and this administration and this majority have done the job that 42 other Presidents did not do as relates to putting this country in the posture it is in right now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, all of what we are saying here tonight has caused me to look at the view of our generation and how we feel about the future and the direction that this leadership, this Republican leadership, is taking this country.

We did a little research in my office. President John F. Kennedy once implored Americans to ask not what their country could do for them, but what they could do for their country. Another important question that all of these issues raises is how all of this budget cutting and pulling the rug out from under college students' future leaves them feeling in terms of public service and what their government can do for people and whether they would want to be a part of that.

So we found some research that showed just exactly how our generation feels about this. A 2004 Hart Research Study for the Council of Excellence in Government found that 34 percent of young Americans said the idea of a government service career did not appeal to them.

What does that say about the confidence that this leadership is inspiring in our generation? Mr. Speaker, that is 34 percent. That is a huge number. It means they have no confidence in government's ability to improve people's lives.

After 9/11, we were starting to change those statistics. You saw after 9/11 the incredible response of first responders and of volunteers. All of our hearts in America swelled after the response from 9/11. The polling that was done then showed that young people felt that the response to 9/11 made them more likely to pursue careers in government and the public sector. But recent events, the culture of corruption, cronyism, the lack of competence that has been evident since the inception of this administration has absolutely, in 3 years from 9/11, 2001, to 2004, totally turned that belief in government's ability to improve our lives on its head.

Just by way of example, some things that most likely did cause that, let us go under the category of corruption. When young people see politicians, leaders of our Nation, deliberately deceiving the American people, an example would be the recent indictment of Mr. Libby and the deceptive actions of Mr. Rove. You have people who spend their lives serving their country; and what happens, people in the administration, a person for the first time indicted in 130 years that served in the White House, people in the administration repay them that service by revealing a CIA's agent covert status, jeopardizing the lives of countless numbers

of government employees who are trying to do good work on behalf of the United States of America.

Example number two of corruption: We went to Iraq under questionable circumstances, under false pretenses, no question about it. We send American men and women into the battlefield, and more than 2,000 have given their lives. If you ask the average person, particularly in our generation, if they know for what those lives were given, I do not think that they feel confident that they would give an answer that anyone would be happy about.

Let us look at the cronyism that might have caused this shift in confidence in our generation. This generation of young people is extremely independent. They have a spirit of self-determination. They are less likely to identify with a political party. Most young people today are identifying themselves as Independents. They see political appointments based on friendships. The appointment of Michael Brown, ''Brownie,'' because he was a college roommate with someone in the administration, with a friend of the President, being put in charge of one of the most important agencies in the country in terms of making sure that people's lives are protected as a disaster approaches and we can help them afterwards, we put someone in charge of that agency whose sum total of his experience was he was president of the Arabian Horse Association.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, that is what our generation is going to change when we take the country in another direction. It is time for us to start saying that we want the best and the brightest to come and work for our government. There used to be a day and age when government service, assisting your country, coming from the private sector for a few years and helping out and giving your time and talents to the government was a respected endeavor.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. The bottom line is we can do better. Together we can lock arms. Our generation can say to the generation in front of us that has been leading this country, give us the baton. It is our turn. We are not going there any more. We want to turn this country around. We want to make sure our children have health care, that mothers and fathers when their kids get sick do not have to wait until their kid is so sick they have to take them to the emergency room for their health care.

We do not want to cut the budget for abused and neglected children. We are going to continue to pursue deadbeat dads. State legislators have fought tooth and nail to ensure that we can continue to go after deadbeat dads; yet in this budget we will consider this week, that opportunity would be lost. We would be preventing that opportunity. The list goes on and on. It adds insult to injury. It cuts the school lunch program, which is a program that makes it so that some kids, the only place they can get a meal, a decent meal, is from that free and reduced lunch, and the Republican leadership would cut that program.

Our generation can take the country in a new direction, and we are ready to.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we are ready, and we have a game plan to find the money.

Why can we not go to the oil companies that we just gave $16 billion in corporate welfare to, why can we not have the courage, why can the Republican leadership here not have the courage to ask the oil companies to give back their $16 billion in corporate subsidies to help pay for some of these priorities?

Why can the President of the United States and the Republican leadership in the Senate and the Republican leadership in the House, why can they not go to the pharmaceutical companies and ask for reimportation for the Medicare program to help save our country billions of dollars?

Why can they not allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate down drug prices with Merck and Pfizer on behalf of the Medicare recipients who are going to now be eligible for Medicare part B?

The Democratic Party has a plan to get that money back from the corporations instead of giving it to corporate welfare and investing it in the United States of America so we can have more scientists, more engineers, more investment in research and development.

Mr. Speaker, the average taxpayer gives us money and they trust us with it. They work hard. We see the top number at the top of the check and you see the number that you actually get to take home. There is a big difference whether you are on the bottom or top scale. You give us your money; and we need to honor that by making sure that when we spend it, we give that taxpayer the best value they could ever get. We need to assure them we are running an efficient, effective government here, not just wasting money and giving to our political friends, like the oil companies. Can you imagine with gas prices what they are now, we are giving oil companies $16 billion in subsidies.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I have to jump in on that point and talk about the tale of two different numbers here. We mentioned earlier the number of $14 billion that was being cut, proposed to be cut out of the student loan program where over $14 billion has been given away in subsidies in these recent energy bills to the oil companies who have not just made record profits; they have made the largest profits in the history of the world.

To me, that is such a glaring and sad example of the priorities here in Washington. We can do better.

I think the American people are hungry for leaders that can inspire us and not divide us and talk about a future that lifts us all up. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) talked about the attitudes of young people and how they did not have a good attitude about public service. I hate to see that.

There are also studies out there that for the first time in the history of these studies being done people believe that the generation after them will be worse off than they are now. To me that is just contrary to everything in our American values. We always want our kids and the next generation to be better off. So I think it is a matter of priorities. It is a matter of attitude, inspiration; and I think people are hungry for that. I think what you all are doing here in getting the word out is really important to give people hope that they can make a difference and that there are leaders here in Washington fighting for them.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is what we are all doing, making sure that not only the Members know exactly what they are doing when we come in and push the red and green button, and endorsing or not endorsing an idea or a plan. I think it is important for us to not only highlight the $14 billion in cuts which mean higher fees for students because the States have to balance. When we make those cuts, they have to make cuts. This is not the end of the cuts to the average student.

When you look at higher education, college education, preparing the next generation, that is not just on that 20-something or 18-year-old. That is on the parents of that 18- or 19- or 20-year-old. That is another burden on their backs.

I just wanted to mention quickly, I was reading this letter as both of you were sharing good information with the Members and the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I am holding a letter dated November 8. It is from the president of AARP. AARP is the largest retirement organization here in the United States and also on the face of the Earth. This is from the CEO. What he is saying here, basically, is that they oppose the Medicaid cuts that are in the House bill. They are for reform, but they oppose the cuts.

I just want to make sure that the Members, and one Member came from the opposite side, the Republican side, and said I wish my friends on the Democratic side would join me in voting for this budget that we have put forth.

I said first you have to work on some of your own Members who have not come to grips on how they can vote for something that AARP is against.

Basically, this letter says that AARP opposes the 2006 reconciliation bill now awaiting consideration before the House.

□ 1845

''We strongly oppose the changes.'' Not that they oppose the changes. They strongly oppose it because they know what it will do. Basically, it goes on further. For example, they say: ''The House package, in effect, would

prevent a stroke victim from entering a nursing home, even if there were no other alternatives, simply because she has helped a grandson with college tuition costs.'' This is basically where a bean counter would go in and evaluate the financial situation of the person that wants to go into a nursing home under Medicaid. They would go in and say, You wrote a $500 check for your grandson to go to college. You can afford to pay for this nursing home. We will not.

This is not what I am saying. This is what the AARP is saying, which has thousands of members and is the largest retirement organization on the face of the Earth. It goes on to say that a private nursing home could evict a person, force a person out of a nursing home for a period of time, even after the assets were all exhausted, if they contributed to a hurricane recovery victim. Once again, the bean counters would go in under this budget. This is not fiction. This is fact. Under this budget, and then say they are denying them assistance in a nursing home. This is the reality of what is in the House budget right now.

We talk about Veterans Day, and I am going to mention this as many times as I can because I think it is important, many of us, Mr. Speaker, are going to leave here on Thursday and go do the things that we need to do. Some Members have already entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD recognizing Veterans Day observances throughout the country, the past contributions of our veterans. But at the same time, on the Democratic side what we have called for is we provided $1.6 billion more than the Republican budget for veterans programs for 2006 and $17 billion over the next 5 years.

The Democratic budget reverses what the Republican budget has put forth on the $798 million over the next 5 years in Republican cuts that they have asked the Veterans' Affairs Committee to do, not even talking about what they have done as it relates to cutting $14 billion over the next 5 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, what this really means is that when the veterans go to the VA in some rural areas that some of us in this room represent, there are some VA clinics that are only open once a week, not because that is all they can do, but because they have been cut so much, they cannot provide the health care for the veterans, that when they signed up, they held up their end of the deal. We are not holding up our end of the deal.

But meanwhile back at the ranch, we are giving breaks and tax cuts and some may call them incentives for companies that are making record profits in the history of the world. So when we start talking about these cuts, it is a reality. They are a true reality. And I just took the veterans out for a minute because I knew what we were talking about. But it is an irony that Veterans Day is Friday and Members are going to come here and they are going to take their voting card out, and they are going to put it in the machine, and they are going to look up to see how the leadership is voting, nine times out of 10, and they are going to vote the way the Republican leadership has asked them to vote, and that is very unfortunate.

But I want to warn the Members to take this card, and let me tell them, there are some people who woke up one Tuesday morning at 7 a.m. to vote for some representation. The people that gave Members of Congress this card to vote and put into these machines, I mean, it is not like I have a Miss Mobil in my district or I have a Mister Special Interest in my district. They do not cast a vote. The people that I represent cast a vote. So it is important that we keep that in mind, and I want to make sure that the Members understand, because veterans will be prepared and the American people will be prepared. Why do I have to pay more for health care because they want to make room for the billionaires to receive tax cuts?

Mr. RYAN has that chart there that shows individuals that are making over $500,000. Let us talk about these individuals just for a minute. They are Americans. I do not blame them for the tax cut that they are getting. I blame the individuals that are continuing to build on a tax cut that is already there for that group of people and there is very little that is for the individual that is even making $91,000, a household that is making $91,000 to $179,000 a year. It is not fair.

So when we have people fighting in Iraq, we have three natural disasters here that we are trying to manage and trying to help Americans bounce back from, and then at the same time we want to build on even more incompetence and cronyism as it relates to giving to the special interests, it is just unconscionable; and I hope that Members really weigh heavy.

And I am just going to say this: I am from Florida, and what the Republican majority is asking the Florida delegation to do is to vote for oil drilling miles off the coast of Florida. Oil drilling miles off the coast of Florida. Everyone comes to Florida for what? Tourism. What else? They come to the beaches, from all over the world. It helps our Florida economy, and it helps our national economy. But yet Members of the Florida delegation are being asked to vote against one of the very principles where the Florida Everglades is located, where we have hundreds and thousands of miles of coastline so that when people come to Florida now they can step into a patch of oil and they can see a rig off the coast of Florida.

That is a high order to call a Floridian to do. Both of our Senators are against this, I must add. We have some Members in the House that are going to have to go see the wizard, get a little courage and go to the leadership and say it is not going to happen, bottom line.

I will tell my colleagues what I am prepared to do. As long as that language is in there and we are talking about drilling in the ANWR, let us just take our national parks, and let us just start drilling there. Forget about what we already know, that there is very little oil in many of these areas, that the oil companies just want to go out, not at their expense but at taxpayers' expense, and start to drill in those areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we continue to come to the floor to not only share with the Members but with the American people by letting them know what is going on in this House and what is not going on in this House and that there are alternatives and we are putting forth those alternatives in a fiscally sound way that will place us on the road to balancing the budget but at the same time not hurting the very people that some folks come to the floor saying they want to help.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, the Florida delegation, and the gentleman makes a great point, has an obvious perspective on tourism; and they have got such natural beauty on their coastline that people from around the world come to visit. My family has been down to visit their great State. But the point beyond even that we believe it is the wrong thing to do in these pristine areas, the amount of oil that could potentially be produced is so small, they have to weigh what is the real cost; what are we really losing for generations to come in terms of our environment, and look at what we can do in our immediate future in terms of alternative energy.

Again, I have to mention some of the things we hear before our Science Committee about the innovation and the science that has brought this technology. It is not something that is decades away. It is years away. We have already seen that with the growth of the hybrid vehicles, hydrogen cars, you name it. That technology is here today. Consumers want it, and within the decade we could have the goal to become energy independent, rather than investing in this older technology in pristine areas.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, we have a little administrative transfer to make here.

I yield to Mr. RYAN so he can give the Web site.

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, it is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. People can send us an e-mail.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for giving out that Web site. That has been very useful; and we want to thank Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and even some Members for letting us know some of their thoughts.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we would like the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have this honor.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2862, SCIENCE, STATE, JUSTICE, COMMERCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. GINGREY (during Special Order of Mr. MEEK of Florida), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109–277) on the resolution (H. Res. 538) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2862) making appropriations for Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2419, ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. GINGREY (during Special Order of Mr. MEEK of Florida), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109–278) on the resolution (H. Res. 539) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2419) making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1751, SECURE ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND COURT PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

Mr. GINGREY (during Special Order of Mr. MEEK of Florida), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109–279) on the resolution (H. Res. 540) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1751) to amend title 18, United States Code, to protect judges, prosecutors, witnesses, victims, and their family members, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

THE 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP: DEMOCRATIC PROPOSALS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOHMERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN) to continue his coherent and intelligent argument on behalf of research and development for alternative energy sources and alternative technologies to reduce our dependence on oil.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

We have that technology right here in our country. It is here today. So with the effort and the funding that we have put into some of these technologies that are hurting our environment; that have made us dependent and weaker as a country; that we are depending on resources for the Middle East instead of from the Midwest, that is the future. That is the direction. People are hungry to be led, to be able to get into that technology for their families. It is the right thing to do for the environment. It is the right thing to do not just for our economic security but for our national security interests. So that is the direction we have got to get to in this country.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think the gentleman makes a tremendous point that we try to present here. The way our friends on the other side run the government is not with an understanding of, really, what day and age it is. It is 2005. We are an information technology age. Government needs to be integrated, and our policy on alternative energy sources will strengthen our position in foreign policy. They are not two separate smokestacks. They are one coherent policy that we are trying to integrate here and say they are all connected.

And I think this brings up a tremendous point about leadership, about the corruption and the cronyism, but directly to the incompetence. Here we have, directly after 9/11, a terrorist attack on the United States of America; and everyone in the country was looking to the President for leadership, and no one really knew what to do. It was this great moment in history, but every American citizen wanted to give something. They wanted to be a part of the solution.

And many people will remember, Mr. Speaker, that the American people were going to blood banks. They wanted to give blood. They wanted to do whatever they needed to do. They were donating money to organizations. And the Red Cross had to say, We have enough blood. Thank you, but we have enough blood for now. But the American people still wanted to give. And there were nonprofits and foundations and all kinds of organizations opening up so that the American people could donate money to help the families and the victims of 9/11 and the policemen and the firemen and the emergency responders.

The American people wanted to give. And the best challenge this administration can come up with, not walk to work or get a bike so we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil so we can reduce the chances of this happening again. Do my colleagues know what this administration asked the American people to do? The great challenge after September 11 from this administration was go shopping. If that is not incompetent executive leadership at its best, I do not know what is.

And I get upset because I think that tragic situations like that, as painful as they are, there is a glimmer of possibility within that. And we could have made it a national commitment to search for and get to a point where we are no longer dependent on foreign oil. The American people could have been rallied to that cause, to conserve. And to have the Vice President say that conservation is just a personal virtue, but has no place in the public discourse is an outrage.

So why not, with all the political capital that this President had, why not say this country is going to have an Apollo project for alternative energy sources, for hybrid engines, for biodiesel, for wind and solar and everything else? We know we cannot do it today, but America is not about what we can do today. America is about what we can do tomorrow and next year and 10 years from now. And we could have laid out a long-term strategy of all the great possibilities that this country is so good at throwing out as a goal and then going after it. And it is a shame. It really is incompetent leadership.

And that is one of the reasons that we come here every night. We could be sitting in our offices. We could be going out to dinner. But we choose to come here because we want to ask, Mr. Speaker, the American people to give us an opportunity to take this country in a new direction, to change what we are doing, to get this Congress and make it independent of all the special interests, and to end this incompetence, this inability to govern.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, my good friend from Ohio and my good friend from Missouri, the ''Show Me'' State, they say, we are in a situation right now where we should not be acting like what we call here in Congress under regular order as though it is just another day in Congress, another day at the office, no big deal, everything is fine.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleagues that we should be very alarmed. We should be very alarmed at the fiscal situation we are in. The highest deficit of the history of the Republic. We are borrowing more from foreign countries, breaking records. One administration breaks the record of 42 administrations before it. We have CIA agents being outed.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are not setting good records.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We have CIA agents being pointed out by people in the White House who have the highest national security clearance to know what is going on throughout the world, getting daily briefings. We have a situation where we had Hurricane Katrina, which we have asked for an independent commission, not just for the affected area where Hurricane Katrina and Rita hit, and if we want to add

Wilma, it is not just to deal with that. It is to make sure that we have a 9/11-like commission outside of the partisan commission that we have here in this House to look at the way FEMA and the State and local governments respond to natural disasters, or disasters, period.

Now, we do not even have the ice and water situation down yet when we start talking about FEMA and the response to Americans in need, and I am going to take from Mr. RYAN, taxpayers when they are in need. We do not have that down. Not if, but when a terrorist attack happens in another city here in the United States, what will be the response from the Federal, State, and local governments? I am on the Homeland Security Committee, and I have come to the conclusion that we are not ready, regardless of what the Secretary says, regardless of whatever podium the President wants to get on in the situation room and say that we are ready. We are not ready.

Even if someone had an alcohol problem, the first sign of recovery is saying first we have a problem so that we can work on the problem and start cutting through the egos, cutting through the bureaucracy, because people need help, and we need to be there for them. So we should be alarmed. We should be alarmed about what is going on and what is not going on in this country, and it should be something that Americans should be very concerned about.

The majority side beats their chests. They give floor speeches, tearing up and voice cracking, talking about how they love the troops; but meanwhile here in Congress less than 48 hours from now, many of them are going to put their voting card in the machine that I took out earlier in the last hour and they are going to vote against making sure that veterans are able to get health care in a timely manner, making sure that individuals that are financially challenged in our country have some level of health care, making sure that students pay more and their parents pay more and their grandparents pay more.

So we have a scenario where we have a family that is financially challenged trying to make sure the first person, whether it be black, white, Hispanic, or Asian, is trying to better their bloodline by saying we make sure we send the first member of our family to college.

□ 1900

We want to make sure that my daughter can become an engineer, as we have very few female engineers in this country. I want to help. We are going to ask our family to pool in. If grandma is on Medicaid and she wants to go into a nursing home, the bean counter is going to come and say, well, you wrote a check to Warren County Community College for your grandson, so that means you do have some disposable income. And this is from the AARP letter, this is not the Kendrick Meek report. Then she will be denied the opportunity to go into a nursing home. This is callous, and it is un-American.

So I want to make sure that the Members know exactly on the other side what they are doing, when they are doing it, because I am going to tell you something. It is not going to be a well-kept secret here in Washington, D.C., and it will not go away. We will continue to remind not only them, but the American people, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that they took their card and they voted against those very things, and other things.

They are asking Floridians to vote for drilling off the coast of Florida, I mean, the place where the Everglades is located. People travel across the world to come to Florida, across the world to come to the beaches and to the Everglades. We want to drill there; that is what this budget is saying. So many of the members of the Florida delegation, when I say the majority are Republican, they are going to have to make a real hard decision, and it is something that we must encourage those Members to vote for our alternatives.

So should we be alarmed? We should be alarmed. There should be a line of Democrats and Republicans outside the door of this Chamber. I will tell my colleagues this: there still has not been a mumbling word from the said committees that have oversight and something to say about who has a national security clearance and who does not. I think it is pretty evident from reading the indictment that there are some questionable issues there as it relates to folks in the White House maintaining their national security clearance.

The President's response to it? Do not take it from me; take it from his own lips of what he said in The Washington Post and other publications that are out there. The President has ordered the White House staff to attend a mandatory briefing beginning next week on ethical behavior and the handling of classified material.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would suggest, I say to the gentleman, that it is a little late.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Missouri, I yield to him.

Mr. CARNAHAN. In Missouri they have a saying that the cow is already out of the barn, I say to my colleagues, and that certainly applies to this situation here.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, again, I am pleased to join the younger Members, both in age, I want to be very clear about that, as well as time and service, if you will, in this House. I was back in my office, and I apologize for being somewhat late, but I had business to attend to.

I heard my colleagues talking and having this conversation relative to Medicaid. But being, if you will, the senior Member, and I would acknowledge honorary member of the 30-something Group, I really felt compelled to leave my office and come here and address the issue of Medicare, since shortly I will be receiving my Medicare card. It is a year or so away, but I am really getting close. I think it is important to remind senior citizens that they are at risk in this budget process. Now, we do not know what is going to happen, but we know that there have been a variety of proposals out there.

Now, it is my understanding that the other branch of Congress has concluded the budget process and has made cuts in regards to Medicare. Can any of my colleagues help me in terms of what the order of magnitude of those cuts are to Medicare and what does it portend, what does it mean in terms of services and health care for senior citizens in this country, if the Senate cuts should prevail?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I can say that it is within the billions, and some may say it deals with HMO administrative costs, but they will affect the delivery of services, managed care services to many of the people that are in the managed care area.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Maybe the gentleman can help confirm what I just heard when I was in the cloakroom, and that is over 10 years, it is $40 billion that is reduced from Medicare. Obviously, we are not consulted, and it is not something that we would support. But what does it mean in terms of actual delivery of health care services to seniors? What does it mean? Has anyone explained this to older Americans who need Medicare?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I will tell my colleague right now, higher copayments, higher premiums, and benefits are going to be reduced. That is the bottom line. It does not get better for the seniors; it gets worse. It gets better for those who are on the side of the Republican majority, because I am going to tell you right now, if you are a special interest group, you do not even have to grab the mike and come to committee. Do not worry. The leadership on the opposite side of the aisle, they have your back. Do not worry, do not say anything, oil industry. Billionaires, do not say anything; we have you. We are going to make sure you are okay. Do not worry about it; you do not have to fight.

They were talking about a group within the Republican Conference, or I should say it is the entire Republican Conference, that has come up with a budget that is making cuts across the board for everyday Americans. Not a mumbling word, not a mumbling word about billionaires. The gentleman from Ohio just had a chart up of Americans making over half a million dollars. Not a mumbling word to just say, you know, we need 3 percent of what we have given you to not only balance the budget, but soften the cuts on everyday Americans.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The gentleman is talking about the Medicare cuts to our seniors.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Not Medicaid, but Medicare.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Medicare, the health care program for our senior citizens, our grandparents, our parents. And the gentleman is talking about the Senate making $40 billion in cuts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Over 10 years.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Over 10 years. This is the same time that the Republican Conference wants to pass $70 billion in tax cuts; and we know when they give tax cuts, who they give them to. But I think it is important, because I forget the number of what the Republican Conference here in the House wants to cut Medicare to, and what that number may be.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I am confused. Again, maybe one of my colleagues or somebody could contact my office or contact the Web site and explain to us what it will mean in terms of the delivery of health care to older Americans if that $40 billion cut is accepted.

Let us remember, by the way, and I think we really should acknowledge our respect for a group of Republicans that comprise the Republican Study Committee, there are in excess, I understand, of 100 Republican Members who belong to this particular group who have the political courage, and I think we should acknowledge that, to stand up and say, if they had their way, they would really cut Medicare.

This is their proposal: they would increase Medicare part B premiums from 25 to 30 percent. What that translates into, my friends, is a cut over 10 years of $85 billion to Medicare, imposing a huge burden on seniors.

But that is not the end of what the Republican Study Committee budget would do. They would restructure Medicare's cost-sharing requirement over a 10-year period; that would be an $87 billion cut. They would go further by imposing a home health care copayment of 10 percent, and that translates into almost a $32 billion cut.

Now, if my math is correct, that amounts to, or that is a cut over 10 years, that this particular group would embrace, in excess of $200 billion to Medicare.

□ 1915

Now, maybe you can help me. I keep hearing how health care costs are continuing to rise and are escalating. And yet, this particular group, the Republican Study Committee budget, if their plan was adopted while health care costs are increasing, they would reduce Medicare funding by $200 billion according to the budget that they announced several months ago in terms of what they were calling Operation Offset.

Now, obviously, we would never, I cannot imagine a single Democrat supporting that particular approach, but I think, Mr. Speaker, we should acknowledge the courage that they have, or not courage, but at least their willingness to be open and transparent and provide us with their blueprint for America, despite the fact that I do not think there is a Democrat, I know there is not a Democrat that would support it. But what do all these cuts mean?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I wonder, I wonder why they would cut Medicare to the tune of $200 billion.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Over 10 years

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Over 10 years. I wonder why they would not go to the oil companies and ask them to give back their billions and billions and billions in subsidies. I wonder why they would not go and ask the pharmaceutical companies.

But what really strikes me as odd as you talked about the premium going up and the copay going up. I wonder if the health care we have given to Iraqis, I wonder if they are asking them for a copay. I wonder if they are asking the Iraqi citizens who are getting free universal health care in Iraq for a copay. Does anyone know? Because I do not know.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I believe the Iraqis have universal health care. They have universal health care.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I do not think there is a copay or anything

Mr. MEEK of Florida. No, it is universal health care. It is something that we talked about here, and it just did not happen

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. So we are cutting health care, we are increasing the copays, increasing the premiums, but yet giving, we have created a welfare state in Iraq, in which we are not even asking the Iraqis to pay a copay or pay their premium.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, if I can ask a question, who is paying for the creation or the establishment of all of those primary health care centers in Iraq? Who is paying for that?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The American taxpayer, Mr. DELAHUNT. The American taxpayer is paying for it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, if I can, when will that money be paid back to the American taxpayer?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yeah, because I thought they said that we could, did they not say something about loaning them? Well, we wanted to loan them the money, right?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The American people have been told a lot of things as it relates to what is going to happen and what is not going to happen in Iraq. They have been told a lot of things. We have been told that the oil will pay for reconstruction, the oil will pay for military costs; and I can tell you right now what is very unfortunate. We have men and women, I have 21 military installations in my State alone, three combined, three unified commands in my State. We have a number of Guard and Reserve troops. We have 80,000 active duty individuals in my State, servicemen and women, including their families, and a number of them are deployed at this time.

Some of them are engineers that are working in Sadr City and, you know, doing infrastructure work and fresh drinking water and building schools and doing all of that. We had them before the Armed Services Committee the other day. But as it relates to the incompetence and the cronyism of contracting, and the abuse and the awarding of incompetence and cronyism, that is overshadowing the work that these men and women are doing on the ground.

They are saying, No one is paying attention to what we are doing. And I said, Yes, there are some people that are paying attention to what you are doing, and you are doing a fine job.

One thing I can say about the military, they do what they are told. If their country tells them to do something, they do it. It is not, well, you know, I do not know. Maybe I will do it. No, that is not the case. No, they do it. And that is the reason why, regardless of how you may feel, you know, about the reasoning behind why we are in Iraq or not, we have got to respect those individuals. I do not see anyone that does not.

But when you have the incompetence and the cronyism from the top, from the folks that are wearing the suits and ties and being driven around here in motorcades making the decisions, it squashes the goodwill that those men and women are doing. And so it is important for us to really pay attention to these secret areas of torture that our taxpayer dollars are involved in.

Someone may say, well, those are potential terrorists or they are identified terrorists. Why would we care about how they are treated or if they are tortured? This is the reason why you care. And I want to make sure the Members understand this. You care when a U.S. soldier is caught or detained by an insurgent, that they will not be treated in a way that is inhumane, that they will not be tortured and that we do not have to see on the 6 o'clock news a family crying because they fear that they will go through some of the acts that have taken place in secrecy under this administration.

It goes to the incompetence. It goes towards making sure that you carry out your leadership acts. And there have been cries, fortunately, out of this Congress denouncing that kind of activity.

When we talk about what the American people have been told, that is a big part of the problem. The American people are not being leveled with. What we are saying on this end, on this side of the aisle, is that we can do better together and we are stronger together when we work together; and we are willing, and the record has shown, in a bipartisan way.

And we talked about Social Security. We talked about how Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan came together to save Social Security in a bipartisan way, not, you know, Tip O'Neill going off in his corner and saying, We will let you in on it when we feel like it, after we have it written, okay? Or President

Reagan at the same time saying, Well, I do not have the authority of the legislative branch but through an executive way I am going to make you do it the way I want you to do it. Conversations went on not just over coffee, but over U.S. policy, and that is not what is happening right now, gentlemen.

When this budget, if it passes this House and they go into what we call a conference committee with the Senate budget and the House budget, I guarantee you, I guarantee you $20, and I am not too much of a betting man, but I am going to tell you this. I guarantee you that the Democratic conferees that are supposed to be at the table will not be invited. It will not be a conference.

You can talk to Mr. RANGEL, the ranking member of Ways and Means. He is walking around here, they are saying they are meeting in conference. What? No one told me about the meeting; I did not get a notice.

We talk about the spirit of the House. We have to make sure that we move in a way that the American people want us to move. This is truth, not fiction.

When the gentleman from Massachusetts talks about what we are being told, there are a lot of things we are being told. It is just not true. We were told that the White House had nothing to do with the outing of the CIA agent. Then later we find out that they had everything to do with outing a CIA agent.

Not one member of the administration subpoenaed, not one person called from The White House to this House of Representatives and the said committees to answer the question, how could this happen? Why has it happened? Not one individual, outside of Mr. Libby, who I would assume that his national security clearance has been taken by now, has been called on the carpet on other information that has leaked out of the White House that has jeopardized national security.

This is serious stuff.

So when we talk about what people are saying, or what we are being told, the real issue and the reason why the American people sees the President at a 37 percent approval rating and this Republican-controlled House is between 35 and 31, that is the reason why, because they don't believe what we tell them, especially on the majority side, because it ends up not being the truth once it is all ironed out.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, there are some things that we do know. We know this, that there was a debate on this floor several years ago where billions of dollars were appropriated to rebuild Iraq. And those of us on the Democratic side supported that funding, if, if it were going to be provided in the form of a loan because we were concerned about American taxpayers being repaid their money. But the Republican leadership, at the insistence of the White House, said, No way; we are going to give this money to Iraq.

So what we have done, and I think there is an irony here, we have provided free of charge, no interest, no money to be returned, we have provided good health care for Iraqis. We have built 110 primary health care centers. We have educated 2,000 health care professionals. We have vaccinated 3.2 million children. And I think we all applaud that and support that.

We have rehabilitated 2,700 schools. We have paid the salaries and trained 36,000 teachers in Iraq. We have provided $1 billion for safe drinking water and we have marshland restoration initiatives going on in Iraq.

We have built, or we have completed some 3,100 community action programs. We have provided millions for the construction of housing and public buildings for Iraqi citizens. We have rebuilt railways for Iraqis.

And you know what else we did? We rehabilitated a canal system. We built a dam, a beautiful dam, a dam that will hopefully serve well the Iraqi people. We built this dam in Mosul. At the same time, we are cutting millions from the Army Corps of Engineers, including funding for levee construction in Louisiana, Mr. Speaker, in Louisiana. We did that free of charge.

Now, we support it. But you know what? We would hope, given the abundance of energy reserves that the Iraqis have that they would pay us back once they get on their feet. But, no, you know, here is the President that said he didn't believe in nation building. I did not know he was talking about America. But he must believe it when it comes to Iraq. How about doing it for our fellow citizens in Louisiana and Mississippi and Texas that have been devastated by natural disaster?

□ 1930

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am just so sorry. I know we have two other colleagues here who are very respectful Members of this body, but I just cannot let this moment pass. The fact that we are forgiving from the beginning, we forgave the money that we gave to Iraq and the money that we continue to spend in Iraq, which we have appropriated the largest U.S. embassy in the world in Iraq; but let me just make this point here.

Katrina, Rita, Wilma. Those Americans that were identified to receive individual assistance when they called that 1–800 number, FEMA, something FEMA, you know what they get back when they say when they filed for FEMA assistance? They do not get a check back immediately. They get an application from the Small Business Administration to fill out for a loan when they are on their knees. You fill out that loan application first. And if, and this is a big if, if you do not qualify for that Small Business Administration loan, then FEMA comes and they actually try to figure out how much money they can grant—you what they call ''mitigation''—to put your house back together.

So for billions of dollars, 87 billion-plus continuing to give and there will be another supplemental soon for not only the troops but also to pay for other operations in Iraq with companies like Halliburton and other companies that are under investigation that are enjoying Katrina contracts right now, we are asking Americans when they are on their knees to fill out a loan application.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is worse than that. You know what is happening in Louisiana, Mr. Speaker? You know what is happening? They have got a bill for $4 billion. That is the estimate. If they want help from the Federal Government they have got to come up with some $4 billion. I think it was the State treasurer there that requested the estimate, and he said we asked for a grant. We asked for a grant, and they gave us a loan. And yet we are doing the opposite in Iraq.

As a Nation, a government, your primary obligation or responsibility goes to your own people. That is what we should be doing. And the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is so right.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we do not swear to the Iraqi Constitution. We do not come here to represent the Iraqi people. First and foremost it is the United States. So you are telling me that we are giving money to the Iraqis, grant money; but if we have a natural disaster in the United States, we ask the American citizens to fill out a form so they can maybe get a loan. And if an American citizen wants to go to college, they got to take out a loan.

So we are loaning money to the American people so our kids end up with $17,500 in college debts because we loan them the money; but when it comes to Iraq, we have created a welfare state.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But they want $4 billion from the State of Louisiana, and the State of Louisiana's annual budget is $8 billion. So half of it would go to the Federal Government so that Louisiana can get relief from their Federal Government. That just does not make sense.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And at the same time we are giving money away, and I know my good friend from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN) wants to make a point. At the same time we are giving this money away to Iraq, it is not like we have it. We are borrowing money from other countries. This President has borrowed more money from other countries in the last 4 years than this country has borrowed from other countries in the last 224 years.

So let us get this straight, the Republican majority in the House, the Republican majority in the Senate, and the Republican President, who have all been in charge the last 4 years, have borrowed more money from foreign countries and then they give it to foreign countries. They give it to Iraq. That is unbelievable to me when at the same time we have American citizens who need a little bit of assistance on college tuition, but they got to go borrow the money.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I have got to jump in here. The point that I think we all saw in the aftermath of the hurricanes was the incredible spirit of the American people rising to the occasion when their government, the people in charge of our government now, frankly, did not live up to the expectation and that spirit of the rest of the country.

And the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) was talking about rebuilding. What about rebuilding the damaged relations all around the globe that have occurred because of the way we got into Iraq? We are going to be dealing with that for years and years to come. Not only is it hurting us economically but hurting us in terms of our relationships around the world, and that affects us here at home in what we can do.

But it gets back to the issues we have talked about tonight about priorities in leadership, and there is such a disconnect with this leadership. They are so out of touch.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This Republican leadership.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Right. This Republican leadership is so out of touch with the American people. When we all go home and talk to our constituents, we get an earful. They want to see people connected with the people back home, and that is our job, especially in this body that is the closest representative body in the Federal Government.

That is our job. We work for the people back home. And if we are not speaking out and speaking up to implement that here in these programs, whether it is Iraq, whether it is rebuilding the gulf, whether it is this budget reconciliation, it is about priorities and expressing those people's beliefs here; but that is not getting through with this leadership.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am almost afraid to have this outfit that we have in charge here, Republican majority and the Republican running the executive branch, I am almost afraid to have them go out into the international community to try to rehab our relationship because their solution is to just throw money at the country and just give them grant money, taxpayer money. That is their only solution. A stronger America begins right here at home. We need to do this together because it is only together that America can do better.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And that is the reason why we are here on this floor. Many Members have gone home and they are having dinner or watching some sort of program in prime time, but we opt to be here letting not only the Members know, Mr. Speaker, but also the American people know what is happening in this House. We want to bring true meaning to the fact that this is the people's House. We want the American electorate and Members to know that the people of the United States of America elected us to be here to represent them.

We may be from different districts, but we have been federalized by the fact of our elections to represent all Americans. And the question that is before us now is what kind of government do you want? Do you want a government that is going to set the stage, a stage for a grandmother to make the decision if she is going to contribute to her grandson's or granddaughter's college education in jeopardy of losing her Medicaid benefits for nursing home care if she needs it? Are we going to set the stage for a veteran who wants to see an ophthalmologist who has to wait 3 months now, maybe 6 months?

Are we going to ask legislators from environmentally sensitive States to jeopardize the very trademark of their State on behalf of special interests to drill oil just miles off the coast? Is that the kind of leadership that we want? Do we want the kind of leadership that is willing to protect those industries, the industries that make record profits, not we are just making it or we are just barely holding on and we need some assistance or an airline bail-out? It is not that. It is individuals eating lobster and steak and telling the shareholders it has never been better ever in the history of the world.

But better yet, you are going to come to the people's House, or what is supposed to be the people's House, take the taxpayers' dollars, put it in your pocket while you hold on to your profits in this pocket and for you to expand and continue to prosper, that you are going to do it on the backs of everyday Americans that are paying taxes, need it be Democrats or Republicans.

We should be very alarmed. Americans should be very concerned, and we should every day in this 109th Congress rise up every time we have the opportunity to give voice to those individuals that have sent us here or those individuals that wish that their Congressman or Congressperson would stand up on their behalf.

We challenge those individuals in the majority to make the right decision. Make the right decision, because history will reflect on what each and every one of us did in this moment, in this time when you are cutting school free and reduced lunch for poor children. I mean, I am not a preacher or anything, but I am here to tell you for poor children and then walk around chestbeating that we are balancing the budget and just a couple of weeks from now going to try to pass a tax cut on behalf of who? Not the people that you have just taken from, but the people who are receiving benefits on the backs of the people that you just took from.

So it really does not make sense. The only thing that really makes sense here is the fact that those with financial power not only in this country but in this city and the special interests that they are going to get what they want, bottom line. And if you question it, you are in the line of fire. So when you start looking at this very real standpoint of what we may call the ''political two step,'' I may say the political look left, we are going right or look right we are going left. The bumper sticker theme politics that are there, we have to make sure that we break this thing down for people who are not voting politics over principle, but they are voting principle over politics. And that is Democrat, Republican and Independent. These are the things we have to focus on.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. So let us see if we can tie this all up. Our country gives billions of dollars in corporate welfare to the most profitable industries in the world that are having the most profitable quarters in the history of mankind. They are then giving tax cuts that go primarily to the top 1 percent, who are probably executives of the oil companies and the pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Half a million dollars.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Half a million dollars and up. So you get corporate welfare from the public taxpayer. Then you get tax cuts for people making more than half a million dollars. And then the money that does get sent here, we give it to Iraq and create a welfare state. And then we do not even have the money to give away; we go and borrow it from a foreign country. We have borrowed more money in the last 4 years from a foreign country than we have in the last 224 years.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. China.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. From China, from Saudi Arabia.

Mr. DELAHUNT. What the gentleman is saying in effect is that we are borrowing money from China so that we can create a welfare state in Iraq. We have become a conduit. That in very simple terms is what is happening because we are borrowing our way into bankruptcy to cut taxes and to support programs, not for American citizens, but for Iraqis who deserve this help but at least should be required to pay it back. That is what it comes down to. Meanwhile, our own citizens in the States, particularly the gulf States, they have to ask the Federal Government for help; and what they hear is, we will give you help, but it will come in the form of a loan. You have got to do matching funds.

I think we have got to be friends to our Republican colleagues too, because there are many Republicans that have spoken out about the incompetence of what has transpired in Iraq, have spoken out about the folly of the approach to the war.

Senator PAT ROBERTS from a neighboring State to Missouri and Kansas, back in May of 2004, that is a year and a half ago, he made this observation, now he is a Republican, a respected Republican: ''We need to restrain our growing U.S. messianic instincts, a sort of global engineering where the United States feels it is both entitled and obligated to promote democracy by force if necessary.''

□ 1945

That comes from a highly respected Republican, and yet what do we hear from the White House? We have to stay the course, but please, please temper can the White House not just stand up and say that we were wrong? We have heard other individuals say that. They would gain respect.

Senator LUGAR, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, a highly well-respected Midwestern Republican senator, this is what he had to say back in September of last year: ''Our committee heard blindly optimistic people from the administration prior to the war and people outside the administration, what I call'' and these are his words, ''the 'dancing in the street crowd' that we just simply will be treated with open arms. The nonsense of all that is apparent. The lack of planning is apparent.''

You know what? Now, we face another scandal. We have heard about scandals in the past 6 months to a year. We talk about special interests on this hill, but there is a scandal brewing out there, and the American people are going to discover it.

It was reported by two very conservative journalists in the conservative paper, the Washington Times. Let me quote for just a minute: ''The Bush administration is facing another scandal that is quietly bubbling away in the background as most press attention is focused on the'' Plame affair.

''Defense officials tell us the scandal involves massive corruption in Iraq related to U.S. and international funds meant for reconstruction efforts and the failure of the administration to control'' and monitor ''those funds.

''The officials say conservative estimates put the amount of stolen money at about $9 billion, and that it could be as high as $15 billion.''

So you know what, many of those projects that we had hoped to do to build a Nation, to build a Nation in Iraq, that money went into somebody's pockets. It was the wild West, and you know what, I, as ranking member, the senior Democrat on the subcommittee in the Committee on International Relations dealing with oversight and investigations, have asked repeatedly, let us investigate, let us conduct oversight hearings into what has happened to that money. And you know what I hear?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That is what you get. You are hitting it right on the head.

Here is the real issue here. In the Armed Services Committee, you start talking about strategy for success or you start talking about an exit strategy or what is the strategy, what is the coalition strategy, it is why are you asking questions? What you are talking about? Cutting and run? No. We are talking about running responsible government. That is what we are talking about.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Are you a patriot? Are you hearing that?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Are you a patriot. Are you with them or are you with us. It is to assault individuals from asking the questions constitutionally we are supposed to ask. To say that on the expiration date we have is a carton of milk is really it is not a question of the expiration date. It is a question of since we have a coalition of other countries and single digits, as they may be, of those individuals that have pulled out, since we have those individuals there, what is our strategy of being able to exit? Is it to train Iraqi troops? Okay. We have been doing that now for just under 2 years now. We are still under the numbers and they are not ready yet, and we still have a lot of work to do.

Mr. DELAHUNT. How long does it take to train a Marine?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It does not take 2 years.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is right.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you that it is important that we do start asking some of the tough questions, that we do start pressing the card.

Mr. DELAHUNT. The entire country wants to have those questions posed, and let us be fair. There are Republicans, there are noted conservatives. We all know William F. Buckley, the founder of the Nation, a respected conservative journalist. When he heard what he has heard, he made this statement: If I knew then, meaning around the time of the debate on the war resolution, what I know now about what kind of situation we would be in, I, William F. Buckley, would have opposed the war.

That should resonate among the Republican leadership and particularly the White House, but they do not want to acknowledge that they have made mistake after mistake after mistake and are compounding it, are driving our economy into a structural deficit in an order of magnitude that we have never seen, that we will never get out of, and most importantly, the lives that have been lost and the men and women that are permanently damaged by this war of choice.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, that just reminds me of something that I think really fits right in with this.

One of my favorite figures in history is President Harry Truman who was from the great State of Missouri. I know that does not surprise you that he would be my favorite President, but he is a great figure to learn about responsibility. He had that famous plaque on his desk that said, ''The buck stops here.'' He was not about blaming somebody else or hiding things from the American people. He stood up and told it like it was.

The other thing we learned from Harry Truman was about accountability. He was kind of an obscure Member of Congress that started something called the Truman Commission that began to review how we spent massive amounts of money through the war effort, but to do it in such a way that was pro-military, to be sure our troops got what they needed, to be sure that the taxpayers were getting a fair deal with how we were spending that money and that these moneys were being accounted for.

This administration does not want that kind of scrutiny but we need that. Eventually, we are going to get that, but it has been delayed and put off, but the American people demand that. They deserve that, and I think leaders in the Democratic party are going to be sure we get to that point.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Especially when Halliburton stock has doubled. I mean, all this is going on and Halliburton's stock's doubled.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. No-bid contract.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. No-bid contracts. They just get money thrown at them.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Taxpayers' money.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the end result is not a good one. It is not an effective use of the taxpayers money.

Mr. DELAHUNT. They were going to try to pull the same thing in the gulf States. They were doing the same thing. They were importing the same practices from Iraq that have resulted in this incredible brewing scandal. They were going to do the same thing right here in the gulf States, but you know what, the American people have caught on and they are backing off.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is why we want the independent Katrina commission, so we could make sure we figure out what we are doing, but we fear that when we start pulling off the onion piece by piece by piece, that we are going to end up finding out what is going on in Iraq, and it will be a tremendous waste of the taxpayers' money.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, what we need is the Congress to reassert itself, coming together on a bipartisan basis and demanding oversight because, you know what, this administration is the most secretive administration in all of American history.

Let me make one final quote, to take one final quote from another Republican, from the Midwest, from the farm belt, Senator HAGEL from Nebraska. He had this to say back in 2004. This is not a Democrat. This is his language. This administration has seen Congress as an enemy and a constitutional nuisance. The world right now is in trouble, and we need to have a Congress and a President and an executive branch that is working together. Amen.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Amen.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me just on another note that I know we all share. Our hearts and prayers go out to those tornado victims in the Knight Township in Indiana and other victims of that tornado. Mr. Speaker I know that the whole House, we are in solidarity with hopefully their fast recovery from this natural disaster, and with that, I know

that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) has the honors of the Web site and closing us out.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes, sir. 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. Send us your ideas, your comments, your thoughts. We appreciate them. We do read what you send in. We are going to be introducing some new methodology in the next week or so. 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. We thank our good friend from Missouri for joining us tonight.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Ms. WATERS (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. SHERMAN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida (at the request of Mr. BLUNT) from November 7 through November 9 on account of family medical reasons.

Mr. NORWOOD (at the request of Mr. BLUNT) for the weeks of November 1 and November 7 on account of minor surgery.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin (at the request of Mr. BLUNT) for today on account of a family medical emergency.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. DEFAZIO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. NUNES) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for 5 minutes, November 14.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah, for 5 minutes, November 9.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, November 9.

Mr. GINGREY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIRK, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. CARSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MICA, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 1285. An act to designate the Federal building located at 333 Mt. Elliott Street in Detroit, Michigan, as the ''Rosa Parks Federal Building''.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 53 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, November 9, 2005, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5033. A letter from the Acting Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule—Provision of Information to Cooperative Agreement Holders [DFARS Case 2004-D025] received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Armed Services.

5034. A letter from the Acting Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule—Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement; Payment and Billing Instructions [DFARS Case 2003-D009] received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Armed Services.

5035. A letter from the Acting Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule—Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement; Multiyear Contracting [DFARS Case 2004-D024] received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Armed Services.

5036. A letter from the Director, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, Department of Treasury, transmitting the Department's final rule—Financial Crimes Enforcement Network; Amendment to the Bank Secrecy Act Regulations—Anti-Money Laundering Programs for Insurance Companies (RIN: 1056-AA70) received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5037. A letter from the Director, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, Department of Treasury, transmitting the Department's final rule—Financial Crimes Enforcement Network; Amendment to the Bank Secrecy Act Regulations—Requirement that Insurance Companies Report Suspicious Transactions (RIN: 1506-AA36) received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5038. A letter from the Director, Office of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule—Extension of Corporate Powers (RIN: 3064-AC94) received October 31, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5039. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5040. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5041. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5042. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

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5058. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5059. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5060. A letter from the Assistant Director, Executive & Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5061. A letter from the White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5062. A letter from the White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5063. A letter from the White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5064. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Listing Gila Chub as Endangered with Critical Habitat (RIN: 1018-AG16) received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

5065. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Allium munzii (Munz's onion) (RIN: 1018-AJ10) received November 3, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

5066. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Determination of Threatened Status for the Southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment of the Northern Sea Otter (Enhydra lutris kenyoni) (RIN: 1018-AI44) received November 3, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

5067. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Department of Treasury, transmitting the Service's final rule—Settlement Initiative [Announcement 2005-80] received October 31, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5068. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Taxation of DISC Income to Shareholders (Rev. Rul. 2005-70) received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5069. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Low-Income Housing Credit (Rev. Rul. 2005-67) received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5070. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Determination of Issue Price in the Case of Certain Debt Instruments Issued for Property (Rev. Rul. 2005-71) received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5071. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Balanced System for Measuring Organizational and Employee Performance within the Internal Revenue Service [TD 9227] (RIN: 1545-BE46) received October 24, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5072. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Excise Tax Changes Under SAFETEA and the Energy Act; Dye Injection [Notice 2005-80] received October 31, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5073. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—South Asia Earthquake Occuring on October 8, 2005, Designated as a Qualified Disaster Under Section 139 of the Internal Revenue Code [Notice 2005-78] received October 31, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5074. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Additional Relief for Certain Employee Benefit Plans as a Result of Hurricane Katrina [Notice 2005-84] received October 31, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5075. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Treatment of Income in Excess of Daily Accruals on Residual Interests (Rev. Rul. 2005-68) received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5076. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Administrative, Procedural, and Miscellaneous (Rev. Proc. 2005-70) received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5077. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Elimination of Filing Requirement for Nonresident Alien Individuals with United States Source Effectively Connected Wages below the Personal Exemption Amount [Notice 2005-77] received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5078. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Withholding on Wages of Nonresident Alien Employees Performing Services within the United States [Notice 2005-76] received November 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5079. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Amendment to Sunset Date of Section 1441 Voluntary Compliance Program under Rev. Proc. 2004-59 (Rev. Proc. 2005-71) received November 4, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5080. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Appeals Settlement Guidelines IRC Section 461(f) Contested Liabilities [UIL No. 9300.30-00] received November 4, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

5081. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, CMM, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule—Medicare Program; Revisions to Payment Policies Under the Physician Fee Schedule for Calendar Year 2006 and Certain Provisions Related to the Competitive Acquisition Program of Outpatient Drugs and Biologicals Under Part B [CMS-1502-FC and CMS-325-F] (RIN: 0938-AN84) (RIN: 0938-AN58) received November 3, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

5082. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, CMM, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule—Medicare Program; Changes to the Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System and Calendar Year 2006 Payment Rates [CMS-1501-FC] (RIN: 0938-AN46) received November 3, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. GINGREY: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 538. Resolution waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2862) making appropriations for Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes (Rept. 109–277). Referred to the House Calendar.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 539. Resolution waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2419) making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes (Rept. 109–278). Referred to the House Calendar.

Mr. GINGREY: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 540. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1751) to amend title 18, United States Code, to protect judges, prosecutors, witnesses, victims, and their family members, and for other purposes (Rept. 109–279). Referred to the House Calendar.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska: Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. H.R. 1630.

A bill to authorize appropriations for the benefit of Amtrak for fiscal years 2006 through 2008, and for other purposes (Rept. 109–280). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. RUSH:

H.R. 4248. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to impose a temporary windfall profit tax on crude oil and to use the proceeds to carry out the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, and Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. OBERSTAR (for himself and Mr. RAMSTAD):

H.R. 4249. A bill to provide for programs within the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Veterans Affairs for patients with fatal chronic illness, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, and Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. MICA (for himself and Mr. MANZULLO):

H.R. 4250. A bill to eliminate fees for assistance provided by the Department of Commerce and agencies thereof under export promotion programs, to authorize appropriations for such purpose, to direct the Secretary of Commerce to take certain steps to expand export promotion activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on International Relations.

By Mr. POMBO (for himself, Mr. FORD, Mr. KIND, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. CASE, and Mr. BASS):

H.R. 4251. A bill to help relieve the shortage in the supply of firewood for home heating use by making additional quantities of free firewood available to individuals from National Forest System lands; to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas (for himself, Mr. BARTON of Texas, Mr. POE, Mr. CULBERSON, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. HINOJOSA, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. CONAWAY, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. REYES, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. HALL, and Mr. ORTIZ):

H.R. 4252. A bill to designate the headquarters building of the Department of Education in Washington, DC, as the Lyndon Baines Johnson Federal Building; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida (for herself and Mr. JONES of North Carolina):

H.R. 4253. A bill to expand the authority of the Secretary of Homeland Security to transport and remove aliens unlawfully present in the United States; to the Committee on Homeland Security, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. COOPER (for himself, Mr. COSTA, Mr. EMANUEL, Mr. FORD, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ):

H.R. 4254. A bill to establish a commission on corporate entitlement reform; to the Committee on Government Reform, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, and Rules, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. FORTUÑO, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, and Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA):

H.R. 4255. A bill to convey certain submerged lands to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in order to give that territory the same benefits in its submerged lands as Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa have in their submerged lands; to the Committee on Resources.

By Mr. LANGEVIN:

H.R. 4256. A bill to amend the Social Security Act and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to assure comprehensive, affordable health insurance coverage for all Americans through an American Health Benefits Program; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. POMEROY (for himself, Mrs. CUBIN, and Ms. HERSETH):

H.R. 4257. A bill to amend the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921, to prohibit the use of certain anti-competitive forward contracts; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. SHAYS (for himself and Mr. LANTOS):

H.R. 4258. A bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to ensure that evacuation procedures are included as a part of State and local emergency preparedness operational plans; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. THOMPSON of California (for himself, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. FILNER, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, Mr. MATHESON, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. HOLT, and Mr. STRICKLAND):

H.R. 4259. A bill to establish the Veterans' Right to Know Commission; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Rules, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mrs. CHRISTENSEN (for herself, Mr. HONDA, and Ms. BORDALLO):

H. Con. Res. 293. Concurrent resolution supporting the observance of a Campaign to End AIDS Advocacy Day, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. BAIRD (for himself, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. GORDON, Mr. BOEHLERT, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. WU, and Mr. HOLT):

H. Res. 541. A resolution honoring Drs. Roy J. Glauber, John L. Hall, and Theodor W. Hansch for being awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for 2005, and Drs. Yves Chauvin, Robert H. Grubbs, and Richard R. Schrock for being awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for 2005, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Science.

PRIVATE BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 3 of rule XII,

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois introduced a bill (H.R. 4260) for the relief of Muhammad Amjad Khan, Samina Khan, Madiha Khan, Zainab Khan, and Tayyab Khan; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 282: Mr. SWEENEY.
H.R. 303: Mr. KUHL of New York and Ms. HARMAN.
H.R. 389: Mr. FILNER.
H.R. 414: Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania and Mr. BUTTERFIELD.
H.R. 503: Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.
H.R. 521: Mr. OLVER.
H.R. 558: Ms. GRANGER.
H.R. 583: Mrs. DAVIS of California.
H.R. 586: Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, Mr. ADERHOLT, and Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.
H.R. 597: Mr. ISTOOK.
H.R. 670: Mr. RUPPERSBERGER.
H.R. 690: Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
H.R. 913: Mr. CALVERT.
H.R. 927: Mrs. JONES of Ohio.
H.R. 972: Mr. CANNON, Mr. GORDON, and Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 995: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. FILNER, and Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD.
H.R. 999: Mr. LAHOOD.
H.R. 1000: Mr. DOYLE.
H.R. 1120: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts and Mr. FATTAH.
H.R. 1144: Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. EMANUEL.
H.R. 1176: Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota.
H.R. 1227: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 1298: Mr. ANDREWS.
H.R. 1348: Mr. LEWIS of Georgia.
H.R. 1357: Mrs. SCHMIDT.
H.R. 1416: Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. LANGEVIN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. WU, Ms. HOOLEY, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. BISHOP of New York, Mr. DELAHUNT, and Mr. TIERNEY.
H.R. 1449: Mr. ISTOOK.
H.R. 1849: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mrs. DAVIS of California, and Mr. FOLEY.
H.R. 2012: Mr. GORDON, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. CANNON.
H.R. 2047: Mr. STUPAK.
H.R. 2052: Mr. CUMMINGS.
H.R. 2053: Mr. CUMMINGS.
H.R. 2177: Mr. MCCOTTER.
H.R. 2357: Mr. FORTUÑO.
H.R. 2525: Mr. SHIMKUS.
H.R. 2533: Mr. GRAVES, Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania, and Mr. LOBIONDO.
H.R. 2658: Mr. REHBERG.
H.R. 2669: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN and Mr. KIRK.
H.R. 2892: Mr. MARKEY and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 2989: Mrs. BIGGERT and Mr. LOBIONDO.
H.R. 3049: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.
H.R. 3082: Mr. MARSHALL.
H.R. 3189: Mr. WEXLER.
H.R. 3284: Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 3502: Mr. NADLER.
H.R. 3582: Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN.
H.R. 3616: Mr. SIMMONS.
H.R. 3705: Mr. LEACH.
H.R. 3715: Mr. GERLACH.
H.R. 3776: Mr. GOODLATTE.
H.R. 3782: Mr. LEACH.
H.R. 3795: Mr. KIND and Mr. MCNULTY.
H.R. 3868: Mr. CARTER and Mr. CALVERT.
H.R. 3889: Mr. ISTOOK, Mr. FILNER, Mr. SALAZAR, and Mr. SESSIONS.
H.R. 3944: Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. SALAZAR, and Mr. MCINTYRE.
H.R. 3973: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.
H.R. 3986: Mr. MENENDEZ.
H.R. 4029: Mr. CLAY, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Ms. LEE.
H.R. 4032: Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. FOLEY, Mr. WELDON of Florida, and Mr. PRICE of Georgia.
H.R. 4050: Mr. SALAZAR.
H.R. 4079: Mr. ISTOOK.
H.R. 4089: Mr. KUHL of New York.
H.R. 4093: Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida and Mr. HASTINGS of Washington.
H.R. 4098: Mr. MARSHALL, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. COLE of Oklahoma, Mr. WYNN, Mr. WAMP, Mr. STRICKLAND, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, and Mr. CLAY.
H.R. 4126: Mr. CASE.
H.R. 4134: Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire.
H.R. 4145: Mr. HOLT, Mr. BONNER, Mr. EVERETT, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. BACHUS, Mr. SCHIFF, and Mr. KNOLLENBERG.
H.R. 4168: Mr. MURPHY, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.
H.R. 4194: Mr. LANGEVIN, Ms. WATSON, Mr. INSLEE, Mr. TIERNEY, Ms. DEGETTE, and Mr. UDALL of New Mexico.
H.R. 4200: Mr. GALLEGLY, Mr. MCHUGH, Mr. LUCAS, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, and Mr. MANZULLO.
H.R. 4232: Mr. MCDERMOTT.
H.R. 4238: Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas and Ms. HARRIS.
H.R. 4239: Mrs. EMERSON and Mr. EDWARDS.
H. Con. Res. 42: Mr. MATHESON.
H. Con. Res. 52: Mr. ISTOOK.
H. Con. Res. 230: Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. STEARNS, Mr. BASS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. KELLER, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky, and Mr. GONZALEZ.
H. Con. Res. 268: Mrs. MUSGRAVE, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. UPTON, Mr. BEAUPREZ, Mr. PENCE, Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia, and Mr. FLAKE.
H. Con. Res. 280: Mr. MCNULTY and Mr. MEEKS of New York.
H. Con. Res. 284: Mr. BLUMENAUER and Mr. MEEKS of New York.
H. Con. Res. 285: Mr. WELDON of Florida and Mr. UPTON.
H. Res. 302: Mr. COSTA and Ms. NORTON.
H. Res. 335: Mr. BAIRD, Mr. EHLERS, and Mr. SHAYS.
H. Res. 458: Mr. CUMMINGS.
H. Res. 466: Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania.
H. Res. 479: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts and Mr. MCDERMOTT.
H. Res. 505: Mr. HOLT, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. WAXMAN, Ms. CARSON, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. WU, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. DOYLE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Mr. COSTELLO, Mr. DICKS, Ms. HOOLEY, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. OLVER, Mr. PASTOR, Mr. RUSH, Mr. VISCLOSKY, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Mr. ENGEL, Mrs. MCCARTHY, Mr. EVANS, Mr. WEINER, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. BAIRD, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, and Ms. WATERS.
H. Res. 507: Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
H. Res. 535: Mr. CONYERS, Mr. MCNULTY, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mrs. MCCARTHY, Mr. NADLER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. WEINER, Mrs. MALONEY, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. EMANUEL, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. BERMAN, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. KIRK, and Mr. LEACH.

DELETIONS OF SPONSORS FROM PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were deleted from public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 2048: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.
H.R. 3146: Mr. PRICE of Georgia.

AMENDMENTS

Under clause 8 of rule XVIII, proposed amendments were submitted as follows:

H.R. 1751

OFFERED BY: MR. FLAKE

AMENDMENT NO. 1: Add at the end the following:

SEC. ___. COLLATERAL REVIEW IN CAPITAL CASES.

(a) REVIEW BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—

(1) APPLICABILITY.—Section 2261 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (b) and inserting the following:

''(b) COUNSEL.—This chapter is applicable if—

''(1) the Attorney General of the United States certifies that a State has established a mechanism for providing counsel in postconviction proceedings as provided in section 2265; and

''(2) counsel was appointed pursuant to that mechanism, petitioner validly waived counsel, petitioner retained counsel, or petitioner was found not to be indigent.''.

(2) SCOPE OF PRIOR REPRESENTATION.—Section 2261(d) of title 28, United States Code is amended by striking ''or on direct appeal''.

(3) CERTIFICATION AND JUDICIAL REVIEW.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 154 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking section 2265 and inserting the following:

''§ 2265. Certification and judicial review

''(a) CERTIFICATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If requested by an appropriate State official, the Attorney General of the United States shall determine—

''(A) whether the State has established a mechanism for the appointment, compensation, and payment of reasonable litigation expenses of competent counsel in State postconviction proceedings brought by indigent prisoners who have been sentenced to death;

''(B) the date on which the mechanism described in subparagraph (A) was established; and

''(C) whether the State provides standards of competency for the appointment of counsel in proceedings described in subparagraph (A).

''(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The date the mechanism described in paragraph (1)(A) was established shall be the effective date of the certification under this subsection.

''(3) REQUIREMENTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—To qualify for certification under paragraph (1)—

''(i) any mechanism described in subsection (1)(A) that was created on or after the effective date of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–132) shall be created by statute, rule of the court of last resort, or rule of an agency authorized by State law to promulgate statewide rules of court and must meet the requirements of section 2261(c); and

''(ii) for any mechanism described in subsection (1)(A) that was created prior to the effective date of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–132), all or part of the qualifying mechanism and standards may have been created by published policies, practices, and standards of the court of last resort or of a statewide judicial administrative agency, and the State must have substantially complied with the requirements of this section and section 2261 in providing qualified counsel to indigent prisoners sentenced to death who did not validly waive counsel.

''(B) ONLY EXPRESS REQUIREMENTS.—There are no requirements for certification or for application of this chapter other than those expressly stated in this chapter.

''(b) REGULATIONS.—The Attorney General shall promulgate regulations to implement the certification procedure under subsection (a).

''(c) REVIEW OF CERTIFICATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The determination by the Attorney General regarding whether to certify a State under this section is subject to review exclusively as provided under chapter 158 of this title.

''(2) VENUE.—The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit shall have exclusive jurisdiction over matters under paragraph (1), subject to review by the Supreme Court under section 2350 of this title.

''(3) STANDARD OF REVIEW.—The determination by the Attorney General regarding whether to certify a State under this section shall be conclusive, unless manifestly contrary to the law and an abuse of discretion.''.

(B) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 154 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking the item related to section 2265 and inserting the following:

''2265. Certification and judicial review.''.

(b) TIME LIMITS.—Section 2266(b)(1)(A) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking ''180 days after the date on which the application is filed.'' and inserting ''450 days after the date on which the application is filed, or 60 days after the date on which the case is submitted for decision, whichever is earlier.''.

(c) TOLLING.—Section 2263(b) of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (3) as paragraphs (2) through (4), respectively; and

(2) by inserting before paragraph (2) the following:

''(1) if counsel is offered to a State prisoner under section 2261(c)(1), during the period prior to such offer;''.

(d) SCOPE OF REVIEW.—Section 2264 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (d) and inserting after subsection (a) the following:

''(b) VALIDITY OF CONVICTION.—A court, justice, or judge shall not have jurisdiction to consider a claim in an application under this chapter unless the claim concerns the validity of the conviction of the applicant for the underlying offense for which the applicant was sentenced to death. For a claim involving the offense of murder, conviction for the underlying offense means conviction for murder in any degree.

''(c) RELIEF.—For any claim brought under this section, relief shall not be granted, unless the denial of relief—

''(1) is contrary to, or would entail an unreasonable application of, clearly established Federal law, as determined by the Supreme Court of the United States; or

''(2) would entail an unreasonable determination of a factual matter.''.

(e) PRIORITY TO CAPITAL CASES.—Section 2251 of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the first undesignated paragraph by striking ''A justice'' and inserting the following:

''(a) IN GENERAL.—

''(1) PENDING MATTERS.—A justice'';

(2) in the second undesignated paragraph, by striking ''After the'' and inserting the following:

''(b) NO FURTHER PROCEEDINGS.—After the'';

(3) in subsection (a), as so designated by paragraph (1), by adding at the end the following:

''(2) MATTER NOT PENDING.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—A habeas corpus proceeding is not pending, for this purpose, until the application is filed.

''(B) APPLICATION FOR COUNSEL.—If a State prisoner sentenced to death applies for appointment of counsel pursuant to section 408(q)(4)(B) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 848(q)(4)(B)) in a court that would have jurisdiction to entertain a habeas application regarding that sentence, that court may stay execution of the sentence of death, but such a prefiling stay shall terminate not later than 60 days after counsel is appointed or the application for appointment of counsel is withdrawn or denied.''; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

''(c) STAY OF MATTERS.—

''(1) SCOPE OF AUTHORITY TO STAY.—This section, section 2262, and section 2101 are the exclusive sources of authority for Federal courts to stay sentences of death entered by State courts.

''(2) PRIORITY OF CASES.—Any case in which a stay of a sentence of death has been entered pursuant to this section shall have priority over all noncapital cases.

''(3) PLAN FOR CASES.—Every Federal court that hears capital habeas corpus cases shall adopt a plan to ensure that such cases are completed in the minimum amount of time that is consistent with due process.

''(4) MENTAL CONDITION.—A Federal court shall not stay a capital habeas proceeding on the basis of the mental condition of the petitioner unless the petitioner is incompetent to be executed.''.

(f) ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS.—

(1) UNIFORM REVIEW STANDARD.—Section 107(c) of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (28 U.S.C. 2261 note) is amended by striking ''Chapter 154 of title 28, United States Code (as amended by subsection (a))'' and inserting ''This title and the amendments made by this title''.

(2) FINALITY OF REVIEW.—Section 2244(b)(3)(E) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking ''the subject of a petition'' and all that follows through the end of the subparagraph and inserting the following: ''reheard in the court of appeals or reviewed by writ of certiorari.''.

(3) CLEMENCY AND PARDON DECISIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 85 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''§ 1370. State clemency and pardon decisions

''(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under subsection (b), and notwithstanding any other provision of law, no Federal court shall have jurisdiction to hear any cause or claim arising from the exercise of a State's executive clemency or pardon power, or the process or procedures used under such power.

''(b) EXCEPTION.—This section does not affect the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to review any decision of the highest court of a State that involves a cause or claim arising from the exercise of a State's executive clemency or pardon power, or the process or procedures used under such power.''.

(B) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 85 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''1370. State clemency and pardon decisions.''.

(g) APPLICATION TO PENDING CASES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this section, this section and the amendments made by this section shall apply to cases pending on and after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) TIME LIMITS.—In a case pending on the date of enactment of this Act, if the amendments made by this section establish a time limit for taking certain action, the period of which began on the date of an event that occurred prior to the date of enactment of this Act, the period of such time limit shall instead begin on the date of enactment of this Act.

H.R. 4241

OFFERED BY: MR. FLAKE

AMENDMENT NO. 1: At the end of title III, add the following new subtitle:

Subtitle E—Medicare

SEC. 3501. DELAY IN IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM FOR ALL BUT LOWEST-INCOME SUBSIDY ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1860D–1(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w–101(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(4) LIMITATION DURING 2006 AND 2007.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to benefits during 2006 and 2007, no individual shall be treated as a part D eligible individual unless the individual is described in section 1860D–14(a)(1).

''(B) TRANSITION.—For individuals who would be part D eligible individuals but for subparagraph (A), the enrollment-related provisions of this part (and related provisions of part C) shall be applied as if any dates otherwise specified had been delayed for 2 years.''.

(b) CONTINUATION OF DRUG DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAM FOR NONQUALIFYING INDIVIDUALS.—Section 1860D–31(a)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w–141(a)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) CONTINUATION FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, this section shall continue to operate during 2006 and 2007 in the same manner it operated during 2005 in the case of discount card eligible individuals who would be part D eligible individuals during such period but for the application of section 1860D–1(a)(4)(A).''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall be effective as if included in the enactment of Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–173).

H.R. 4241

OFFERED BY: MR. FLAKE

AMENDMENT NO. 2: At the end of title III, add the following new subtitle:

Subtitle E—Medicare

SEC. 3501. ONE-YEAR DELAY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall provide for a one-year delay in the enrollment of individuals in prescription drug plans and MA–PD plans under title XVIII of the Social Security Act. In effecting such delay, the Secretary shall provide for an appropriate delay in contracts with such plans and in open enrollment periods.

SEC. 3502. ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD AND TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; CONTINUATION OF MEDICAID PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS.

(a) CONTINUATION OF DRUG DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAM.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall continue to provide for the medicare prescription drug discount card and transitional assistance program under subpart 4 of part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act during 2006 under the same terms and conditions that apply during 2005.

(b) CONTINUATION OF MEDICAID COVERAGE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall continue to provide for coverage of prescription drugs under the medicaid program during 2006 under section 1927 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396r–8) under the same terms and conditions that apply during 2005.

H.R. 4241

OFFERED BY: MR. FLAKE

AMENDMENT NO. 3: At the end of title III, add the following new subtitle:

Subtitle E—Medicare

SEC. 3501. TWO-YEAR DELAY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall provide for a two-year delay in the enrollment of individuals in prescription drug plans and MA–PD plans under title XVIII of the Social Security Act. In effecting such delay, the Secretary shall provide for an appropriate delay in contracts with such plans and in open enrollment periods.

SEC. 3502. TWO-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD AND TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; CONTINUATION OF MEDICAID PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS.

(a) CONTINUATION OF DRUG DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAM.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall continue to provide for the medicare prescription drug discount card and transitional assistance program under subpart 4 of part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act during 2006 and 2007 under the same terms and conditions that apply during 2005.

(b) CONTINUATION OF MEDICAID COVERAGE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall continue to provide for coverage of prescription drugs under the medicaid program during 2006 and 2007 under section 1927 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396r–8) under the same terms and conditions that apply during 2005.

H.R. 4241

OFFERED BY: MR. FLAKE

AMENDMENT NO. 4: At the end of title VII of the bill, insert the following:

SEC. 7002. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.

(a) HIGHWAY BRIDGE PROGRAM.—Section 144(g)(1) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(D) FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.—If a State is provided funds under subparagraph (A) for a project described in subparagraph (A), the State may use all or any portion of such funds to carry out such project or any other project eligible for assistance under this section that the State designates.''.

(b) PROJECTS OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.—Section 1301 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law

109–59) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(n) FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.—If a State is provided funds under this section for a project described in the table contained in subsection (m), the State may use all or any portion of such funds to carry out such project or any other project eligible for assistance under this section that the State designates.''.

(c) NATIONAL CORRIDOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.—Section 1302 such Act is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(f) FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.—If a State is provided funds under this section for a project described in the table contained in subsection (e), the State may use all or any portion of such funds to carry out such project or any other project eligible for assistance under this section that the State designates.''.

(d) HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS PROGRAM.—Section 117 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(i) FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.—If a State is provided funds under this section for a project described in the table contained in section 1702 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59), the State may use all or any portion of such funds to carry out such project or any other project eligible for assistance under the surface transportation program in section 133 that the State designates.''.

(e) TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS.—Section 1934 of such Act is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(d) FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.—If a State is provided funds under this section for a project described in the table contained in subsection (c), the State may use all or any portion of such funds to carry out such project or any other project eligible for assistance under the surface transportation program in section 133 of title 23, United States Code, that the State designates.''.

(f) PROJECTS FOR BUS AND BUS-RELATED FACILITIES AND CLEAN FUNDS GRANT PROGRAM.—Section 3044 of such Act is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(d) FUNDING FLEXIBILITY.—If a recipient is provided funds under this section or section 5308 of title 49, United States Code, or both, for a project described in the table contained in subsection (a), the recipient may use all or any portion of such funds to carry out such project or any other project eligible for assistance under this section or section 5308 of such title, other than a project to fund any operations of buses or bus-related facilities.''.

SEC. 7003. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that State departments of transportation should take project descriptions in section 144(g)(1)(A) of title 23, United States Code, and in the tables contained in sections 1301, 1302, 1702, 1934, and 3044 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59) into consideration if such projects involve improving transportation safety.

SEC. 7004. ACROSS-THE-BOARD RESCISSIONS.

(a) FISCAL YEAR 2006.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—On September 30, 2006, there is rescinded $4,718,047,269 of the unobligated balances of funds apportioned before such date to the States for the Interstate maintenance, national highway system, bridge, congestion mitigation and air quality improvement, surface transportation (other than the STP set-aside programs), metropolitan planning, minimum guarantee, Appalachian development highway system, recreational trails, safe routes to school, freight intermodal connectors, coordinated border infrastructure, high risk rural road, high priority projects, and transportation improvements programs and each of the STP set-aside programs.

(2) ALLOCATION AMONG STATES.—The Secretary shall determine each State's share of the amount to be rescinded by paragraph (1) by multiplying $4,718,047,269 by the ratio of the aggregate amount apportioned to such State for fiscal year 2006 for all the programs referred to in paragraph (1) to the aggregate amount apportioned to all States for such fiscal year for those programs.

(3) CALCULATIONS.—To determine the allocation of the amount to be rescinded for a State under paragraph (2) among the programs referred to in paragraph (1), the Secretary of Transportation shall make the following calculations:

(A) The Secretary shall multiply such amount to be rescinded by the ratio that the aggregate amount of unobligated funds available to the State on September 30, 2006, for each such program bears to the aggregate amount of unobligated funds available to the State on September 30, 2006, for all such programs.

(B) The Secretary shall multiply such amount to be rescinded by the ratio that the aggregate of the amount apportioned to the State for each such program for fiscal year 2006 bears to the aggregate amount apportioned to the State for all such programs for fiscal year 2006.

(4) ALLOCATION AMONG PROGRAMS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the State, shall rescind for the State from each program referred to in paragraph (1) the amount determined for the program under paragraph (3)(A).

(B) SPECIAL RULE.—

(i) RESTORATION OF FUNDS FOR COVERED PROGRAMS.—If the rescission calculated under paragraph (3)(A) for a covered program exceeds the amount calculated for the covered program under paragraph (3)(B), the State shall immediately restore to the apportionment account for the covered program from the unobligated balances of programs referred to in paragraph (1) (other than covered programs) the amount of funds required so that the net rescission from the covered program does not exceed the amount calculated for the covered program under paragraph (3)(B).

(ii) TREATMENT OF RESTORED FUNDS.—Any funds restored under clause (i) shall be deemed to be the funds that were rescinded for the purposes of obligation.

(C) COVERED PROGRAM DEFINED.—In subparagraph (B), the term ''covered program'' means a program authorized under sections 130 and 152 of title 23, United States Code, paragraph (2) or (3) of section 133(d) of that title, section 144 of that title, section 149 of that title, or section 1404 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59).

(5) LIMITATION ON RECALCULATION OF EQUITY BONUS PROGRAM.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the amounts determined, and the amounts allocated, under section 105 of title 23, United States Code, for fiscal year 2006 shall not be recalculated to take into account a rescission made pursuant to this subsection.

(6) STP SET-ASIDE PROGRAM DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''STP set-aside program'' means the amount set aside under section 133(d) of title 23, United States Code, for each of transportation enhancement activities and the division between urbanized areas of over 200,000 population and other areas.

(b) FISCAL YEAR 2007, 2008, AND 2009.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), there is rescinded 10 percent of each amount authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 2007, 2008, and 2009 by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59), including any amendment made by such Act, and including any amount authorized to be appropriated for the equity bonus program under section 105 of title 23, United States Code, but excluding any amount authorized to be appropriated for the highway safety improvement program.

(2) TIMING.—A rescission made by paragraph (1) of an amount authorized to be appropriated for a fiscal year shall take affect on October 1 of such fiscal year before any apportionment or allocation of such amount and before such amount is subject to any set aside or subtraction.

(3) LIMITATION ON RECALCULATION OF EQUITY BONUS PROGRAM.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the amounts determined, and the amounts allocated, under section 105 of title 23, United States Code, for a fiscal year shall not be recalculated to take into account a rescission made by this subsection.

(c) SEPTEMBER 30, 2009.—Section 10212 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59) is amended in subsection (a) by inserting after ''high risk rural road,'' the following: ''high priority projects, transportation improvements,''.

(d) REPORTS.—Not later than the 60th day following the date of each rescission made by subsection (a) or (b), the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report containing the amount rescinded for each program referred to in subsection (a) and the amount rescinded for each program or activity for which there is a rescission made by subsection (b).